Flying Snake

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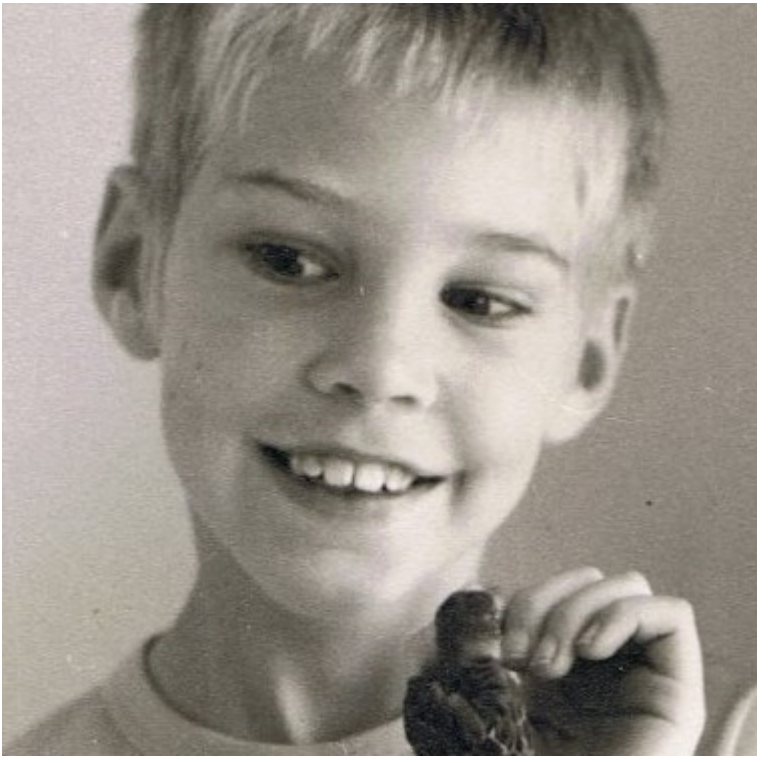

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Ostrich eggs in churches . Talking duck . Man manipulating eyeballs . Zebras in Maryland . Fresh water Octopus . Yorkshire crocodile . Petrified calf . Mystery Beast in West Midlands . The Van Meter creatures . And more!

FLYING SNAKE SUBSCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

ESTABLISHED BY RICHARD MUIRHEAD AKA DR DEVO IN 2011

Flying Snake appears about twice a year depending on the time I can find to research for items to include in it and whether or not I have recovered from dancing `The Poot` at Macclesfield`s clubs and pubs. Cover price is £3.99, £ 12 for 3 issues, please send a check for £3.99 etc to Richard Muirhead NOT Flying Snake, to:

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Essays extoling the occult,racism,sexism will never be considered. Photocopies of previous articles available at author`s and my dis-cretion.

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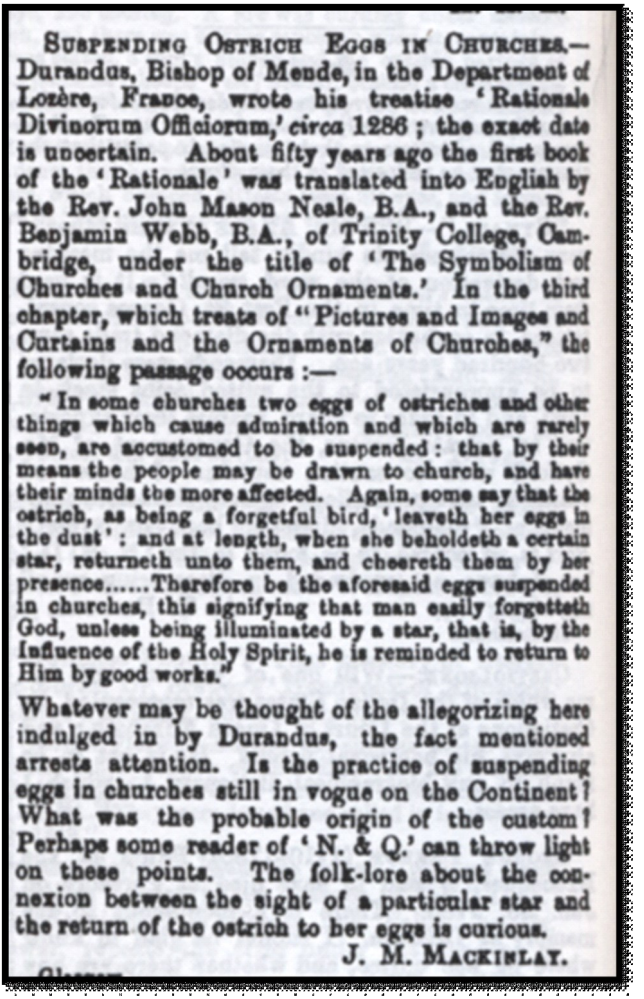
Dr Devo`s Diary

"For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this is-land. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames." *Christopher Smart `Rejoice in the Lamb`. Poet, naturalist, lunatic (1722-1771)*

Lo and behold here`s another veritable smorgasbord (ooo I do love that word!) of cryptozoological and Fortean goodies for you. Talking of favourite words,if any of you remember neologisms from your youth, please let Dr Devo know as I am always interested in collecting such invented and eccentric words. Take `Hoogaroos` for example;there is no accurate definition of this word, it is a Muirhead expression of joy or excitement,very appropriate for this time of year with Christmas only about ten days from now. Thanks very much to Jon Downes for giving me the book `Wilding` for Christmas, I have not yet started reading it but it looks very interesting. By the time Jon is reading this he will know that I gave him `Boss Snakes` by Chad Arment, which as its title suggests is about sightings of anomalous giant snakes in the U.S.A. I am trying to recall what cryptozoology books I have bought or wanted to buy in 2021. Woodknocks volume 5 is on my menu, this is an American journal of Sasquatch studies. I have bought the new book on historical sightings of tigers in Hong Kong, `The Last Tigers of Hong Kong,true stories of big cats that stalked Britain`s Chinese Colony` by John Saeki. I`m really looking forwards to getting my teeth (ho ho) into that one. It only remains to wish you a Happy New Year and fruitful crypto research in 2022, let`s hope covid abates (but don`t hold your breath) and you might even get time to listen to some Devo! Thanks to Shane Lea,Loes Modderman, Richard George ,Karl Shuker and Natale Cincinnati for contributions.

OSTRICH EGGS IN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Loes Modderman



SUSPENDING OSTRICH EGGS IN CHURCHES.—Durandus, Bishop of Mende, in the Department of Lozère, France, wrote his treatise 'Rationale Divinorum Officiorum,' *circa* 1286; the exact date is uncertain. About fifty years ago the first book of the 'Rationale' was translated into English by the Rev. John Mason Neale, B.A., and the Rev. Benjamin Webb, B.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge, under the title of 'The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments.' In the third chapter, which treats of "Pictures and Images and Curtains and the Ornaments of Churches," the following passage occurs :—

"In some churches two eggs of ostriches and other things which cause admiration and which are rarely seen, are accustomed to be suspended: that by their means the people may be drawn to church, and have their minds the more affected. Again, some say that the ostrich, as being a forgetful bird, 'leaveth her eggs in the dust': and at length, when she beholdeth a certain star, returneth unto them, and cheereth them by her presence.....Therefore be the aforesaid eggs suspended in churches, this signifying that man easily forgetteth God, unless being illuminated by a star, that is, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, he is reminded to return to Him by good works."

Whatever may be thought of the allegorizing here indulged in by Durandus, the fact mentioned arrests attention. Is the practice of suspending eggs in churches still in vogue on the Continent? What was the probable origin of the custom? Perhaps some reader of 'N. & Q.' can throw light on these points. The folk-lore about the connexion between the sight of a particular star and the return of the ostrich to her eggs is curious.

J. M. MACKINLAY.

The clipping here comes from ***'Notes & Queries',*** a 3-monthly periodical that started in 1849 and still exists.

N&Q did what Googles does for us today: giving information and answer questions on the most widely different subjects.
The success of N&Q in the UK led to publishing offspring in the USA, and several seperate publications around specific subjects.
Most of the N&Q are now digitallized, and it really is enjoyable to browse through them.

The question posed by J.M Macinlay to N&Q of 5 May 1894, p 348, was about the use and symbolism of Ostrich eggs in churches. He explains how he stumbled upon this curious tradition in the clipping, and cites the fragment in this boek from many centuries ago, wondering if this custom is still alive today, and where it comes from.
If he got an answer from readers of N&Q, I haven't been able to find any.

But...googling I found that this custom is inter-religious; not confined to Roman Catholic tradition.
W.R.Lethaby writes in his 1892 book *'Architecture, Mysticism and Myth'* about ostrich eggs that are suspended in the *Aya Sophia* in Constantinopel, adding that "these hanging eggs seem to be universal in the East, in churches, Mosks and gravesites alike.
He then cites other travellers who *'saw a mass of ostrich eggs in mosks in Egypt, in Coptic churches along the Nile, but also in the Nativity church in Bethlehem'.*

According to Mackinlay's clipping the ostrichs tend to forget their breed, just like people forget their Maker.Hanging an egg in church for all to see is a gentle reminder of that fact; the ostrich egg as a symbol of vigilance
Next to this specific symbolism, eggs are a universal symbol of Creation. Life comes from the egg, hidden at first but growing and manifesting itself gloriously. That's why we eat and decorate eggs at Eastern: pagan or Christian, it's all about New Life , Hope, Resurrection; the eternal cycle of Life..
The symbol is thousands of years old.
In Medieval times Ostrichs were unknown as were their eggs. Hanging a chicken egg in church wasn't very impressive, so 'griphon eggs' were

used. But since griphons are mythical birds their eggs were kind of elusive. So cocos nuts were used as decoration, gradually replaced by big eggs of porcelain or jewelry. Possibly Peter Carl Fabergé (1846-1920), creator of the Romanov bejeweled eggs, got his inspiration, centuries later, from these beautiful hanging eggs in many churches.

The custom to use ornamented ostrich eggs was very wide spread, and not only in big buildings.
In Athens and Mt Athos they were hanged before icons, and on Coptic churches ornaments with ostrich eggs were placed on the roofs. Seems a rather vulnerable arrangement.

On a Jewish site I found that also synagogues used ostrich eggs for largely, but not quite the same reason: to remind worshippers that God's eye is upon them and they shouldn't dwell on other things, for the ostrich breeds its eggs with watching them in constant loving attention, and not by sitting on them.Obviously no one in all these traditions took the trouble to observe an ostrich breeding, maybe because there were no ZOO's around yet. Well...

The Van Meter Creatures

Shane Lea and Richard Muirhead

Towards the end of September and in early October 1903, a group of winged pterosaur-like creatures frightened residents of the town of Van Meter,Iowa,U.S.A.Perhaps the most surprising thing about these cryptids apart from the fact that they may have been living pterosaurs

Is their absence from books and web sites within the discipline of cryptozoology. For example, a search on Dr Karl Shuker`s Shuker Nature blog using the words “Van Meter” scored no hits. We could not find Van Meter in Ronan Coghlan`s comprehensive Dictionary of Cryptozoology,Michael Newton`s Encyclopaedia of Cryptozoology which gives a long summary of living pterosaurs from before the Twentieth Century onwards. George Eberhart`s two volume Mysterious Creatures also does not mention it. I did ask Dr Shuker what he thought the Van Meter cryptids were but as of late November 2021 I (Richard Muirhead) had not received a reply. Fortunately there is enough information on these cryptids online to summarize the story in some depth.This is how the Cryptidz fandom web site summarizes the story: https://cryptidz.fandom.com/wiki/Van_Meter_Visitor “The strange events occurred in October of 1903. Several respected members of the community told of a mysterious half-animal, half-human winged creature that terrorized some of the town's residents during several nights in the course of the week. Descriptions of the beast suggested that it had large bat-like wings, left a terrible stench wherever it went, and, even stranger, it fired beams of bright light from its forehead.The bizarre account recalls how several of the locals attempted to shoot the beast but their gunfire didn't appear to have any effect. Fed up with the menace, a group of townsfolk banded together one evening and pursued the creature to an abandoned coal mine.

There they confronted not one, but two of the beasts, which both turned and disappeared down in to the gloom of the mine…"

It is our opinion that there is no reason to suppose that the Van Meter creatures were some kind of paranormal entities. It is the opinion of Chad Lewis, Kevin Lee and Noah Voss, authors of `The Van Meter Visitor A True and Mysterious Encounter with the Unknown` that the creatures were paranormal. Indeed the Van Meter cryptids have all the hall marks of the Ropen,the pterosaur-like cryptid of Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in the world,including the U.S.A. The flying snake of Namibia (see the Centre for Fortean Zoology Yearbook 1996) of 1942 also had a light on its head. The paranormalists point to the fact that when shot at , the bullets seemed to have no effect. However an easy explanation for this is that the shots may have missed, or -the creatures skin may include a substance or covering that makes bullets ineffective. As Shane wrote to me on November 12th 2021: " Logically,there are two explanations for the Van Meter Cryptid.It is either a known zoological animal like a Great Blue Heron—4ft tall ,with a 6ft wing span, or some type of unknown flying reptile, possibly a living fossil. Either way,you are talking about a natural explanation for the phenomenon." The Great Blue Heron is distributed across North America. The facts surrounding the appearance and disappearance of the Van Meter creature are as follows: For several nights one or more huge pterosaur-like creatures with lights on their heads emerged from an old abandoned mine near the town of Van Meter. Several respected towns folk witnessed the man sized bat-like creature with a light on its horn moving at speeds "the townsfolk had never witnessed before" (The unsolved mystery of the Van Meter Visitor dailymail.co.uk) It also emitted a foul stench, rather like the flying snake of Namibia.

On the first night they flew above the roof tops. The second evening they were spotted by the town doctor and bank cashier Peter Dunn

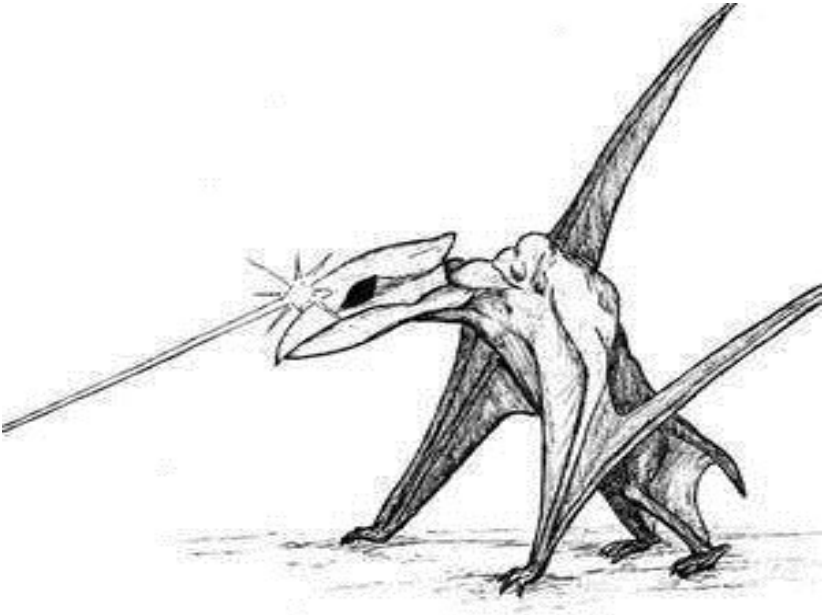


Image from Van Meter Visitor web site https://
cryptidz.fandom.com/wiki/Van_Meter_Visitor

who took a plaster cast of their large three toed tracks (also a possible feature of a flying reptile). The cryptids were seen with a juvenile in the mine shaft, down which they descended, accompanied by a barrage of shots from a posse of the town`s men folk.

On September 24th 2001 I posted a question on the Living Pterosaurs of theWorld Facebook group,asking if the Van Meter cryptid could be been a Ropen-like creature. J.S.G. replied: “It absolutely was,but what`s intriguing about this case is that the creature was able to admit light.” Jonathan Whitcomb in his book `Searching for Ropens And Finding God` reports pterosaur-like animals in Kansas which neighbours Iowa. He also reports a sighting of a Ropen in Minnesota to the north of Iowa in September 2011. On January 2nd, 2013, an U.S. Marine based at Fort Leonard Wood,Missouri,saw a Ropen-like

creature flying overhead. Missouri is to the south of Iowa. It is interesting to speculate that the small group of Ropens that turned up in Van Meter in 1903 were looking for fish to eat,because the Raccoon River passes through Van Meter

Source of image: havhttps://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/isle/images/2/29/The_isle_pteranodon_new_2020.jpeg/revision/latest/scale-to-width-down/2000?cb=20200825030749

and Jonathan Whitcomb has speculated in one of his books on the Ropen that the cryptid exists in coastal areas of Papua New Guinea. The live pterosaurs blog has a report of a pterosaur in southern Minnesota in 1995 reported to have a horn on its head,eating fish (livepterosaurs.com). It was seen at an entrance to a cave. The flying snake (if that is what it was) of Namibia also emerged from a cave. In 2020 Jonathan Whitcomb wrote on the Living Pterosaurs of the World Facebook group: " We have had at times over many years,some sightings that give indirect evidence that some of them hunt bats at night. The evidence for some of them eating fish and birds is more direct." Perhaps the Van Meter cryptids visited the mine shaft to look for bats? According to a Net search, the most popular fish in the Raccoon River are Channel cat fish, flathead cat fish and walleye.

On November 25th Shane wrote to me as follows: I don't think that this is a bird, as close-up sightings never mentioned any feathers. If you shot a Sand Hill Crane or a Great Blue Heron at close range, with a shot gun, chances are it would be toast!
I really don't think this is an alien being that flew in from outer space, while not breathing oxygen and being bombarded with immense amounts of ultraviolet radiation and flying in zero gravity.
A Tulpa-thought-form likewise as with an alien, wouldn't need to descend a telephone pole like a parrot. They cold just go back into thin-air. These kind of theories don't really get us anywhere, as they are VERY difficult to prove.
Back here on Earth, the witnesses seem to be describing a pair- possibly a mated pair, of some type of flying reptile, similar to Pteranodons, that were using an abandoned coal mine as shelter. The horn on the head definitely signals a Pteranodon- a prehistoric animal, native to North America.
The light on the cryptid's horn could be the result of bioluminescent bacteria (found in sea water, the surface of decomposing fish, in the guts of marine animals, and in freshwater and terrestrial animals. Sometimes, these bacteria form a symbiotic relationship with their

host animal.
Thought forms also, don't leave physical evidence, such as the 3-toed -impressions in the soft ground, in Van Meter, that were plaster-casted. The plaster-casts were made of real tracks, not the ones someone carved out of a quarry. Those were completely different and obviously could not be plaster-casted!
Certain Pteranodon species were quite good at terrestrial movement. Pteranodons are considered quadrupedal, using both front and hind limbs for locomotion on the ground. Fossilized, quadrupedal, Pteranodon trackways confirm this.
The locomotion method described in the Van Meter reports is quite similar in this regard.
What would a Pteranodon be doing in Iowa, U .S. A., in the first place? It would be doing the same thing that thousands of other migratory birds do every spring and summer, migrating to the wetland habitats of the American Midwest, to take advantage of the population explosion of insects, plant life, amphibians, small mammals, and minnows that will sustain a nesting, piscivorous, flying reptile and it's brood.
Being primarily nocturnal, this cryptid would migrate under the cover of darkness, only to emerge in Midwestern wetlands at night, thus encountering the prolific, night-time insects, fish and amphibians. This nocturnal lifestyle would be a distinct advantage in keeping hidden from most human activity.
Modern reports of the Van Meter cryptid have continued until as recently as the summer of 2021.
Other Van Meter Cryptid facts include, a very tall animal with bat-like wings. Again, this matches some type of Pteranodon species quite well.
This is my cryptid identikit for the Van Meter Cryptid, including a reasonable explanation of the reported phenomenon."

In conclusion, far from being paranormal entities, the Van Meter cryptids were in our opinion,living pterosaurs,which stretch in their distribution from Papua New Guinea to the heart of the U.S.A. and elsewhere in the world. It is our hope that one day they will be removed from being seen as cryptids and placed within the realm

of mainstream zoology.

Below: Image of Rhamphorhynchus from trailer of *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth,* film in United States,1970. Wikipedia Commons.Public domain in the United States.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pterosaur#/media/

On December 1st Shane provided me with further information: "Hi Richard,
I have uncovered another crucial piece of information linking the Iowa Ropen of yesterday, to today.
It seems that the Amerindian Ioway tribe, that once lived in Iowa, near where Van Meter is today, had a legend of some type of cryptid, that they called a humanoid Thunderbird. This humanoid Thunderbird, would shoot lightning from it's eyes! This could be an Amerindian description of the Van Meter Cryptid.
If it's not too late, we should probably include this information in our current article. What do you say?
"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
Shane

The Quagga on the coffee pot

NATALE GUIDO CINCINNATI

It is a characteristic feature of cryptozoology that – unlike conventional zoology – it also and especially draws on cultural sources when pursuing its core question of hidden animals. The fact that these, when they are material sources, can belong to quite unexpected object genres is shown by the example of a Volkstedt coffee pot whose decor apparently shows a quagga. Admittedly, the coffee pot referred to is not directly related to a cryptozoological context, nor is the quagga known to be a cryptozoon of the first order. Nevertheless, the example shows that cryptozoologically relevant information can be expected practically everywhere.

The coffee pot discussed here can be found in the *Thuringian Museum* in the Eisenach City Palace, but is of Volkstedt provenance. It dates from the years 1775 to 1780 (1). Volkstedt is still home to the oldest porcelain manufactory still in production in Thuringia. Its beginnings date back to 1760, when the manufacturer GEORG HEINRICH MACHELEID (1723-1801) recognised the composition of porcelain mass and was granted the privilege of founding a porcelain manufactory in Sitzendorf in the same year. As early as 1762, the manufactory was relocated to Volkstedt near the princely court of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (2).

The coffee pot in question shows a horse-like animal with a striped head, neck, back and chest (Fig. 1) (3). Belly, legs and thighs are of whitish colour, the upper parts of the body including the tail are beige. The mane is protruding and does not show any stripes.Despite the rather graceful legs and posture, it is unmistakably a quagga, that low-contrast form of the South African plains zebra *Equus quagga quagga*, and not a zebroid. The dotted pattern of the thighs, croup and belly is striking, showing reverse dappling along the stripes. This is not found on many pictorial representations of the quagga, but has been depicted from time to time (cf. Fig. 2).

Fig. 1: A quagga on a coffee pot from Volkstedt in the *Thuringian Museum*, Eisenach
(Foto N.G. Cincinnati)

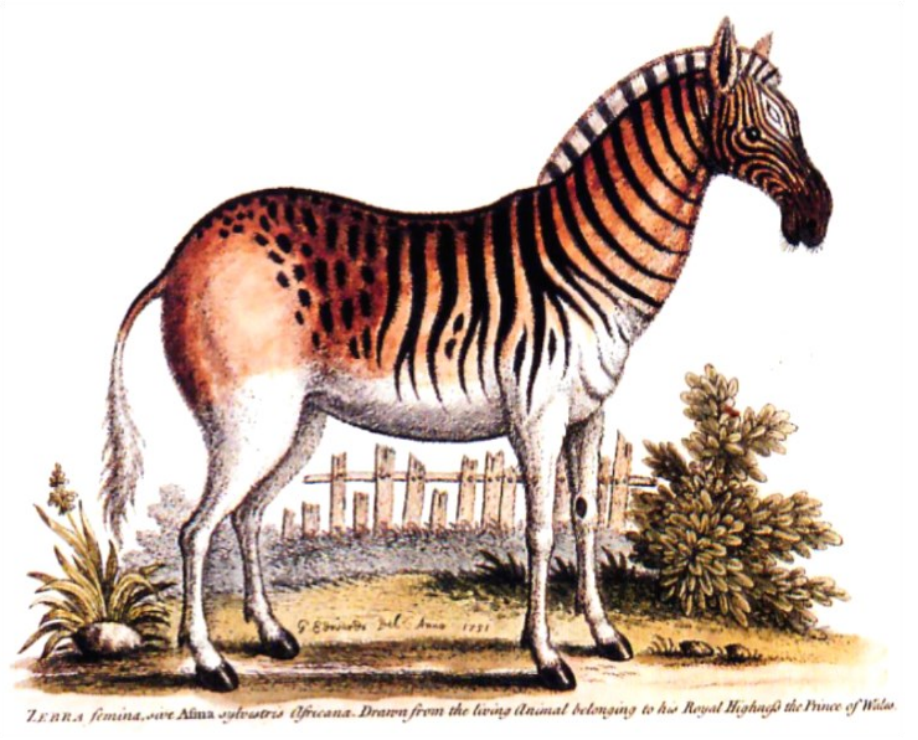

ZEBRA femina, sive Alina sylvestris Africana. Drawn from the living Animal belonging to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales

Fig. 2: Plate subtitled as "ZEBRA femina" in G. EDWARDS *Gleanings of Natural History* (London 1758), but showing a quagga mare at the Palace of Kew, London; the reverse dappling along the stripes is clearly visible

The question arises as to where the porcelain painter of the Volkstedt porcelain ware had knowledge of the appearance of a quagga and why he chose such an animal as the decorative motif of a coffee pot. The answer may be found in the animal parks of the time. Several live quaggas were brought to Europe for zoological gardens. As early as 1758, there was a quagga in the menagerie of Kew near London, which belonged to the Prince of Wales (4). AKIMUSCHKIN counts a total of 16 specimens that found a new home in European zoos in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries (5). SCHLAWE and WOZNIAK

arrive at about 25 quaggas that have been shipped to Europe since 1650. The deserving romantic natural philosopher and comparative anatomist and physiologist LORENZ OKEN (1779-1851) wrote about a wildly behaving quagga stallion in the Paris menagerie, which was kept there from 1794 to 1798 (6). A quagga in the Schönbrunn Menagerie in Vienna is said to have lived to the age of 24 (7). In London, the sheriff J. W. PARKINS of Croydon even managed to harness two animals to a light cart and trot them through Hyde Park every morning between 1817 and 1820 (8). From 1863 to 1867 and from 1872 to 1877, a quagga was also part of the valuable animal stock at Berlin Zoo (9). Furthermore, there were quaggas several times in the stock of the House of Orange (1748-1805), in the Antwerp Zoological Gardens (ca. 1851-1872), in the menagerie of Knowsley (until 1851) as well as in the menageries of Cannstatt, Karlsruhe and the travelling menagerie H. VAN AKEN (1818-1820) (10).

It is therefore not unlikely that the porcelain painter knew a quagga from his own experience, even if the majority of the quaggas mentioned are more recent than the porcelain work mentioned. It is therefore even more likely that the quagga was depicted in a book on natural history (11), such as a young and an old animal in the sixth part of JOHANN CHRISTIAN DANIEL VON SCHREBER's *Die Säugethiere in Abbildungen nach der Natur mit Beschreibungen*, first published in Erlangen in 1774 (12).

The reason for the choice of this décor cannot be answered here with certainty. Whether it was to satisfy the need for exoticism and faraway places with such motifs or to impart knowledge in passing through such depictions. What is certain is that entire tea and coffee services could be decorated with pictures of exotic animals and plants (cf. Fig. 3) and that these were produced in Volkstedt not only for the princely court but also for broader sections of the population (13).

Fig. 3: Unexpected decor for a porcelain tea caddy – A striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*);
Ilmenau around 1810; *Thuringian Museum*, Eisenach (Foto N.G. Cincinnati)

The end of the quagga is quickly told … Or is it?
The quagga is of cryptozoological interest simply because it is an extinct, or rather exterminate species. It is not so easy to answer what a quagga actually is, because this name was used for various striped, single-hoofed mammals. Besides the Grévy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*) and the mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*), the plains zebra (*Equus quagga*), which was also generally called quagga, is the third "zebra species". Of its South African subspecies *Equus quagga quagga*, SCHLAWE and WOZNIAK usefully distinguish the contrasting individuals, for which they use the old name DAUW (formerly also called

Burchell's zebra or tiger horse), from the low-contrast individuals that constituted the actual QUAGGAs, one of which is depicted on the Volkstedt coffee pot (14). Both forms have been extinct since the early 20th (DAUW) respectively late 19th century (QUAGGA) (15).
The reason for the extinction of the low-contrast QUAGGA was mainly the intensive hunting by the Dutch settlers, not primarily for its meat, but to make grain sacks and slippers from the skin (16). It disappeared from large parts of its range as early as the 1850s. The last free-living population became extinct in the 1870s in what was then Oranje-Vrijstaat. Then, in 1878, the last two wild animals died in the semi-desert steppe of the Free State (17).
Of the last quaggas kept in captivity, the London specimen died in 1872 and the second Berlin specimen in 1877. Then, on 12 August 1883, the supposed last individual of the quaggas, a mare, died in the *Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap Natura Artis Magistra* in Amsterdam (18).
But this is by no means the end of the natural history of the quagga. It was not only in the 1950s, when the emerging cryptozoology critically questioned the extinction of numerous animal species, that reports of sighted quagga herds became known in Europe. In May 1901, ERICH VICTOR CARL AUGUST FRANKE (1866-1936), the last commander of the Kaiserliche Schutztruppe Deutsch-Südwestafrika, reported in several places in his diary of smaller Quagga herds in the northern Kaokoveld, some of which were only 20 paces away from the camp, but which he did not manage to shoot (with one exception on 17 May): "*I could have shot at least five. But stupidly I can't bring myself to do it!*"(19), and 15 days earlier "*The Quaggas come to me well 10 times, but I can't decide to shoot: magnificent animals*"(20). In 1917, a certain Major MANNING returned from a journey through the Kaokoveld in South West Africa – today's Namibia – and also reported having seen whole herds of living quaggas (21). HEUVELMANS may have referred to this report when he mentioned "*surviving specimens of the quagga* [...]*, reported from Namibia*"in his 1986 *Annotated Checklist* (22). Other explorers, hunters and even bushmen also claimed to have encountered living quaggas (23). In 1961, AKIMUSCHKIN mentions quagga sightings in Angola, but suggests that they may have been hybrids of donkeys and zebras, which resemble the

quagga (24).
Possible explanations for the late quaggas included misleading sighting reports, as in South Africa all other zebra species were called quagga to distinguish them from the mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*), called "Wildepaard" (25). According to another explanation, the sightings were of Hartmann's zebras (*Equus zebra hartmannae*), whose black and white stripes can blur into a uniform brown colour when seen from a distance "*when the sun is at its zenith and a mirage hovers over the steppe*" (26).
As is so often the case, the much-publicised extinction dates of a species dissolve into the indeterminate when one takes a more intensive look at the sources and literature. Cryptozoology can always start at this point and ask about prolonged survival or even survival into the present.

„In all this, however, there remains something mysterious to me about the quagga“ (27)
WILHELM BÖLSCHE 1909

Thanks to
I would like to thank Mr. MICHAEL KUNZE, restorer at the Thuringian Museum in Eisenach, for providing information on the provenance, dating and decor of the porcelain object presented here.

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Notes

(1) Written communication from Mr. Michael Kunze on 12.02.2018, restorer at the Thuringian Museum Eisenach.
(2) Lauterbach et al. 1999, pp. 19-30.
(3) On the opposite side it shows a dromedary (information M. Kunze, see note 1).
(4) Gerlach 1967, p. 146.
(5) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42.
(6) Gerlach 1967, p. 147; Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 116, Tab. 2.
(7) Fitzinger 1823, p. 714; according to Schlawe/Wozniak only 18 years (→ 1780-1798) (2010, p. 116, Tab. 2).
(8) Schreber/Wagner 1835, p. 215; Gerlach 1967, p. 148; Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42; Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 115.
(9) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42; Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 113.
(10) Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 116, Tab. 2.
(11) Cf. Lauterbach et al. 1999, p. 177.

(12) Schreber/Wagner 1835; here in the accompanying volume of plates, plate CCCXVII and CCCXVII A.
(13) Lauterbach et al. 1999, p. 149.
(14) Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 98.
(15) Today, however, the Burchell's zebra is equated with the Damaraland zebra (*E. q. antiquorum*), which still exists.
(16) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 41.
(17) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42.
(18) Schlawe/Wozniak 2010, p. 117.
(19) Ziegler/Ender 2003, p. 215 (entry 30. May 1901).
(20) Ziegler/Ender 2003, p. 208 (entry 15. May 1901).
(21) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42.
(22) Heuvelmans 1986, pp. 19-20.
(23) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 42.
(24) Akimuschkin 1963, p. 144.
(25) Zeckau/Aermes 2008, p. 195; this may be the case with Victor Franke, who often uses the inaccurate animal names of the Boers in Afrikaans, such as *Tiger* for leopard, *Wolf* for hyena, *Kameel* for giraffe and *P*[f]*au* (-> peacock) for bustard (cf. Ziegler/Ender 2003, pp. 199, 209); on the other hand, he also uses the term *Zebra* (p. 214), but he probably did not mean the mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*), which was called *Wildepaard* in Afrikaans.
(26) Akimuschkin 1972, p. 43.
(27) Bölsche 1909, p. 103

A Relation of a kind of **Worms** *that eat out Stones.*

This is taken out of a Letter, written by one *M. de la Voye* to *M. Auzout*, to be found in the 32. *Journal des Scavans*; as follows.

In a great and very ancient Wall of Free-Stone in the *Benedictins Abby* at *Caen* in *Normandy*, facing Southward, there are to be found many Stones so eaten by Worms, that one may run his hand into most of the Cavities which are variously fashion'd, like the Stones, which I have seen wrought with so much Art in the *Louvre*: In these cavities there is abundance of live-Worms, their excrement, and of that Stone-dust, they eat. Between many of the Cavities there remain but leaves, as it were, of Stone, very thin, which part them. I have taken some of these living Worms, which I found in the eaten Stone, and put them into a Box with several bits of the Stone; leaving them there together for the space of eight days; and then opening the Box, the Stone seem'd to me eaten so sensibly, that I could no longer doubt of it, I send you the Box and the Stones in it, together with the living Worms: and to satisfie your Curiosity, I shall relate to you, what I have observed of them both *with* and *without* a *Microscope*. {322}

These Worms are inclosed in a Shell, which is grayish and of the bigness of a Barly-corn, sharper at one end, than the other. By the means of an excellent *Microscope* I have observ'd, that 'tis all overspread with little Stones and little greenish Eggs; and that there is at the sharpest end a little hole by which these Creatures cast out their excrement, and at the other end, a somewhat bigger hole, through which they put out their heads and fasten themselves to the Stones, they gnaw. They are not so shut up, but that sometimes they come out, and walk abroad. They are all black, about two *Lines* of an inch long and three quarters of a *Line* large. Their Body is distinguish't into several plyes, and near their head they have three feet on each side, which have but two Joynts resembling those of a Lowse. When they move, their Body is commonly upwards, with

their mouth against the Stone. They have a big head, somewhat flat, and even, of the colour of a Tortoise-Shell, braunish, with some small white hair. Their mouth is also big; where may be seen four kinds of Jaw-bones, lying crossewise, which they move continually, opening and shutting them like a pair of *Compasses*, with four branches. The Jaws on both sides of the mouth are all black, the nether Jaw hath a point like the Sting of a Bee, but uniform. They draw threds out of their mouth with their fore-feet, using that point to range them, and to form their Shells of them. They have Ten Eyes, very black and round, which appear to be bigger than a Pins head. There are five of them on each side of the head, standing after this manner,But besides these Worms, I have found, that *Mortar* is eaten by an infinite number of small Creatures, of the bigness of Chees-Mites. These have but two Eyes, and are blackish. They have four feet on each side pretty long. The point of their Muzzle is very sharp, as that of a Spider. I send you but one of them, though I had abundance, but they are dead and lost. It may be, you'l find some at *Paris*, seeing that in the old Mortar betwixt Stones, that is found in Walls made with rubbish, there is great store of them, together with great plenty of their little Eggs. I have not yet examined, whether these be those, that in the surfaces of all the Stones, where they are met with, make little round holes, and small traces and impressions, which make them look like *Worm-eaten Wood*. But 'tis probable, they are such. It should be observed, whether these Worms do not take Wings, and all the other appearances of Caterpillars; and whether they are not to be found in plaister that is full of holes, in Bricks, in Greety Stones, and in Rocks.You may observe more of them in Walls exposed to the *South*, than in others; and that the Worms, that eat the Stone, live longer, then those, {323}that eat the Mortar, which keep not above eight days alive. I have observed all their parts with a very good *Microscope*, without which, and a great deal of attention, 'tis difficult to see them well.I have seen other very old Walls altogether eaten, as those of the *Temple* at *Paris*, where I could find no Worms, but the Cavities were full of Shells of various kinds, diversly figur'd and turn'd: all which I believe to be little Animals petrified.

Philosophical Transactions 1 jan 1753

Thanks to Loes Modderman for providing this

A TEXAN…THINGUMMY

by RICHARD GEORGE

In a piece in *FS* 18 (December 2020) I stated the opinion that the Forest of Dean mystery being of 1924 was an organ grinder's escaped monkey, possibly in a costume. Not long before, another homunculus had mystified witnesses, this time in Farmersville, Texas. This sits at the front of Janet and Colin Bord's chapter on "Winged people and other non-humans" (1), and is one of the saddest accounts in that book, as you will soon see. It also, I believe, has important similarities to the Forest of Dean enigma.

The narrative features in an article in *Fate* magazine (2) by Jerome Clark (under the pseudonym of Alex Evans), and in books by Charles Berlitz, Vikas Khatri, and the aforementioned Bords. The most comprehensive collection of material on this case, however, is found on the website of Patrick Gross (3).

This story was recounted by witnesses after an interval of many decades, and we all know how memory can be fallible. With that proviso…

It was 1913. Three children on their family farm heard the hound dogs howling, and found a small green humanoid (this, of course, was before our stereotype of "little green men"). It was about eighteen inches tall, and clad in what they described as a rubber outfit and a Mexican-style hat. The vicious farm dogs piled in, and tore it to shreds in front of the horrified youngsters, revealing human-like internal organs. The next day there was no sign of the blood and guts, or of the costume. The creature's height and broadly human-like aspect immediately makes me think: monkey. Nothing in Gross's database contradicts this. (I can think of at least two cases in UFO

history where-corpse or image of a monkey was doctored to look like an ET). A monkey's internal organs would be very like those of a human, albeit smaller, so there's no mystery there. As for the remains disappearing: think vultures. But why would a monkey be wearing what sounds disturbingly like a gimp suit ? Bear with me.

The mackintosh was invented in 1824, soon to be followed by the sou'wester. The children's account contains one potentially very important detail: the suit and hat seemed to be *of a piece*, made from the same rubbery material. Was the hat not Mexican, but a sou'wester, possibly too big for the monkey ? Farm boys and girls from Texas, a hot state of the union, might not have seen a mac and sou'wester before. Were "rubber suit" and "Mexican hat" the closest they could come to describing something completely outside their experience ?

So I'm thinking in terms of an eccentric owner, or possibly (old chestnut, I know), a travelling circus or menagerie, deciding a monkey would look cute in a miniature mackintosh and sou'wester.

We *are* talking about Americans, after all.

There may be even more to this scenario. In a collection of fiction by Mario E. Martinez, a Texas restaurant has, as a mascot, a live monkey in a sombrero (4). A monkey in a mac could have been a similar draw for customers. But not necessarily outside an eatery.

The following is from a BBC web page. "The invention of the mackintosh in 1824 spawned a particularly loyal community of rubber lovers, whose letters of enthusiasm about the erotic "thrill of macking"… were published in the periodical *London Life* as early as the 1920s..." (5). I say, Auntie ! Fetishism, in other words. Did an unfortunate primate adorn the entrance to a brothel or fetish club, and escape the clutches of this den of iniquity, only to meet a far worse fate at the hands of the dogs ? Were both these entities, from as far apart as Texas and the Forest of Dean, stray pet monkeys ?

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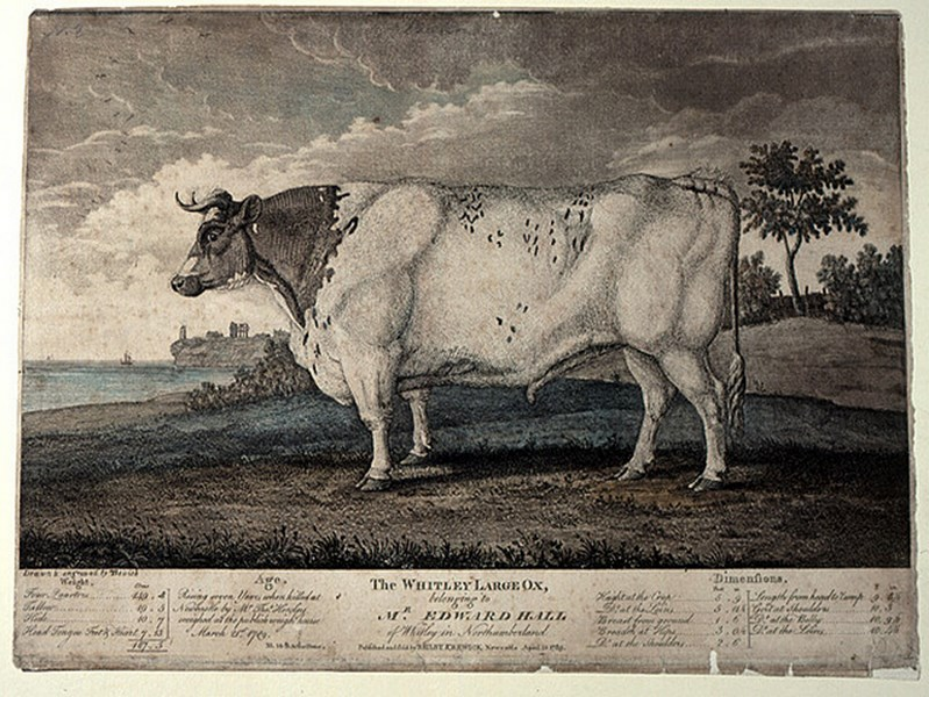
REMARKABLE OXEN OF THE 18th CENTURY

Loes Modderman

We don't see many oxen nowadays in our pastures, but in bygone ages there were plenty.
One of those is pictured in this engraving , made by the then famous artist **Thomas Bewick** (1753-1828), now in the collection of the British Museum.
An ox that merits several portraits must have been unusual.
It was. Larger than any other ox, it measured a shoulder height of



1.70 m, and it was big and fat beyond belief.
So when, in 1789, the owner wanted to bring it to the slaughterhouse in Newcastle, it took seven days to guide the reluctant animal through the public that clogged the road. Everyone wanted to get a glimpse of this marvel.

In the end the ox reached its destination. Man against ox; the out-

-come could not have been any different. Perhaps it was a consolation for the poor animal's soul that he lived on in several pieces of art, and in 2009 the *'Bewick Society'* celebrated the artist and his ox with festivities, the kind of event that can only happen in England.

But at about the same time there was another ox, which I found in an Dutch Almanac from 1779.
The title of the story is:

'Buytengemeene en bezondere uytwerking van den Blixem op eenen Os, die door den zelven getroffen werd.'
Meaning**:**
Exceptional and unusual effect of lightning on an ox, who was hit by it.

In those days people spoke a different kind of language, in Britain as well as in the Netherlands.
I have to translate the story into modern English, which is a pity, for some of the flavor of the story will be lost. I'll try to stay as close to the text as I can.

On 28 August 1774, in the evening, a thunderstorm seemed to approach, but no thunder was heard.A person, who drove by the swamps not far from Lewes, saw two mighty lightning bolts.
That happened at 9 p.m. in the evening.
The next morning, when the oxes were picked up from the swamp to be guided to their work, it turned out that one of the oxes, a four year old, could hardly stand up. It turned out that it was hit bij lightning in a very peculiar manner.
The ox was red and white. The white consisted of big patches, starting on the back and going down in several directions. The belly was totally white, as were the head and the horns.
The lightningbolt that had hit the animal most likely hit the backbone first , and then divided itself along its flanks in a manner that all the white hair of the patches, till the underside of the ribs, had disappeared.
Just a rim of white hair, about half an inch wide, marked the

penis and from the balls. The horns and the curly hair on the forhead was all the same as before, but the hairs on the side of the head, on the flat surface of the cheeks, were gone, and those on the nose were left in stripes.

The story goes on for some time, but this is the most important part. If the animal survived his ordeal is not mentioned.

Lightning is selective, as many observations affirm. We still don't know exactly why that is so. Famous astronomer and spiritist **Camille Flammarion** (1842-1925) was so intrigued by the shenanigans of lightning and ball lightning that he wrote a book about it: *Thunder and Lighting* (1905) in which he brought together a large number of unexplainable instances like those that happened to the red and white ox. The book is still in print and a recommendable read.

Back to the ox: its owner, Mr Lambert, wanted an explanation, and after getting none from the blacksmith/vet he asked, he turned to science. He sent a note with questions about the ox phenomenon to the 'Koninklyke Maetschappy' , something like the Royal Society in Britain.

Charles Fort would have loved the answer of one of the Leading Lights of this gathering of Very Important Gentlemen, who couldn't - and many scientists today are no different - afford to simply say those three magical words: *"I don't know."*
So this very self-aware scholar started to mumble , words I can hardly understand in Dutch, let alone translate correctly. It's longwinded, like all texts in the past. But this is the essence:
"The phlogiston, or the flamable principle is kept for the basis of the colors in the bodies, and it is thought that this is more plentiful as the colors are more lively. But the phlogiston and the electric fluids are probably the same. That's why red bodies are probably filled with electric substance, while white bodies lack this substance."

Mr Lambert must have scratched his head after reading this ' scientific explanation' .

A Soviet View of the Abominable Snowman in the 1960s Part 2

Thanks to Gary Mangiacopra for this information

From Sputnik Monthly Digest Issue 3 1967

"...Until 1912 practically all the zoologists in the world considered that the "dragon of Komodo Island" was a myth concocted by the islanders, but the dragon proved to be a giant lizard, the largest on earth. Natives of Rhodesia used to tell about a beast of prey which they called a "leopard-hyena". Scientists refused to grant credit to such tales until this new species was discovered in 1912 and named the "royal hepard" (Acinonyx).The British zoologist who described it marvelled how such a large animal so distinct from other species could have remained unknown so long.

Against the background of such zoological discoveries the existence of a hairy man-like creature appears quite plausible. Moreover,all these startling discoveries provide grounds for doubting those scientists who treat stories of local inhabitants as absurd.

Nevertheless,the number of scientists who oppose further research into the riddle of the "wild men" has not thinned out. As their irritability increases ,public interest in the matter grows. If the search was for a new species of bear or crocodile, this might not be so. But the possibility that a man-like creature exists intrigues greater and greater

numbers of people.

“ I do not believe in goblins!”

Literaturnaya Gazeta published a letter from Professor Valeri Avdeyev under the heading: “Almasti—Where Are There Traces of Them?”

He wrote:

“ In popular science literature from time to time the question is raised of the existence of hitherto unknown wild men. An article signed by four correspondents of TASS and Nedelya has been published in Nedelya under the heading ,`Do Almasti Exist?`

“The authors of the article report that they themselves chased the wild man in the Caucasian mountains, though they never did catch up with him or get a glimpse of him. They maintain that official science is wrong in rejecting the possibility of the existence of a wild man-like creature, unknown to science, that is hiding in places difficult of access, because more and more testimony is being gathered to the effect that natives of the Caucasus have long known about him and some have seen him in our own times. Since the wild man, according to the authors of the article, is `nothing out of the extraordinary` to the inhabitants of the Caucasus,the various nationalities there have different names for him. A list of these names is given in the article,and all of them mean `forest man` or `wild man`. The purely Russian word `leishy` (wood-goblin), the Tatar `shurale` and others could be added to that list. For some reason the authors of the article did not include those names,although that could have been used as `evidence` that practically all the people of the USSR are closely acquainted with the wild men…“Two years ago I happened to meet Jeanne Koffman in Nalchik.I never tired of listening to her captivating stories. I would have liked to believe everything of which she was so firmly

convinced, so I waited for the interesting but all too often unsubstantiated stories to be followed by facts that would immediately convince me. But no such facts were forthcoming.

“The testimony of eyewitnesses is the main,and so far the only argument on behalf of the existence of the `wild man` of the Caucasus.On the basis of this information not only has the appearance of the wild man been minutely established, but a record of meetings of modern people with him has been compiled. Kabardino-Balkaria proved to be the locale of the greatest concentration,constant habitation and propagation of these beings,with local inhabitants meeting the *almasti* almost every day in various places.

“But here is what strikes me as odd in all this business: neither chance `eyewitnesses` nor people who have for several years now been organising and carrying out special searches, have found the slightest material trace of their existence. Why have corpses of these creatures not been found to this day?After all,despite their extreme wariness (though how can we talk of extreme wariness if they enter homes,where they drink milk and eat boiled potatoes,and generally don`t avoid people?),some of their old ones, children or the sick could have died in accidents far away from their secret recesses. Where is the hide and the hair,and finally,where are the bones of these creatures? If they are Neanderthals, as Prof. Porshnev maintains, why have no traces of weapons fashioned by them, or remains of their feeding ever been discovered?

“It is perfectly clear that it will be possible to talk seriously of the existence of the *almasti* only after unquestionable material traces of their presence have been found. “As to the testimony of `eyewitnesses` ,that can have various explanations. If one wished,one could name quite a number of similar testifiers to meetings with *leshiys,domoviks* (brownies) and *rusalkas* (mermaids).“ After my

personal talks with her I sincerely wished—and continue to wish-Jeanne Koffman and her assistants the best of luck in their

ascinating search. In the meantime,however,like many others,I do not believe in the existence of the almasti or any other goblins."

"The wild man exists!"

Jeanne Koffman`s reply to Prof. Avdeyev was published in the magazine *Science and Religion*. "Esteemed Professor" , she wrote, "I would like to comment on your views on the so-called snowman,which are shared by many others."It is true that we do not yet possess serious material proofs that man-like creatures live in the Caucasus. The stories of eyewitnesses are as yet almost the only material we go by. "This means that our claims are built entirely on their accounts. Do we have any reason to question them? "You,and those who think like you,solve that problem very simply.All reports of wild men, whether they originate from Tibet,the Pamirs,North America or the Caucasus,are dismissed as false.Discussion is thus closed."But there is no unanimity among you, even at arriving at such an unsophisticated conclusion. Some of you think hundreds of eyewitnesses lie just like that,from a depravity inherent in human nature. Others see our informants as practical jokers,glad of the chance to put one over the scientists. Still others consider that all our witnesses are cowards who simply see things out of fright. Kinder critics are disposed to regard them as suffering from hallucinations. Finally,there are those who consider them to be backward ignoramuses, given to superstitious fears.

"Two years ago a well-known Moscow scientist, asked to at least look at my record of evidence,flatly refused to examine "old wives tales" gathered in the marketplaces! Yet the file contained: 1) the record of a two-hour talk in one of the largest party district committees of Azerbaijan,signed by the second secretary of the committee,Dr Kulieva, and a livestock specialist Akhadov; 2) the report of militia captain

Belov;3) an affidavit by Tairov, a research worker of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR; 4) the testimony of Dyakov, an officerficer (Georgia) ;5) the testimony of Shtymov, a Kabardin,chief of the faculty of pedagogics and psychology of the Pedagogical Institute in Kustanai; 6) the statement of Lieut-Colonel Karapetyan, of the Medical Corps,to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR; 7) the testimony of Kardanov, a Kabardin, a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

"Finally, in what category shall we put Marshal of the Soviet Union Rybalko,Major-General Topilsky,head of the special branch of the army sub-unit Kolpashnikov,Professor Satunin and Professor Baradin? What about Professor Khokhlov,who gave a description of the unknown creature back in 1914? "The idea that the `wild man` is just a figure of folklore is ruled out by the testimony of witnesses not belonging to the local population. The view about ill-intentioned deception is incompatible with the testimony of persons who were unaware of the scientific controversy,and who enjoy considerable authority among the local inhabitants. The suggestion that it is a question of hallucinations is refuted by the very nature of these hallucinations-the same in the case of hundreds of people at various times and in different localities… "I agree with you that if one wishes, one can collect any number of rumours about anything. However, people not only hear but they have the ability to evaluate what they hear.There is a method of ascertaining scientific truth by holding polls. A strictly worked-out system of compilation, analysis,comparative evaluation,verification and summarising of information guarantees a definite trustworthiness of the data received…"When I left for the Caucasus some years ago to verify the first reports that had reached us,I considered the possibility of ` wild men` living there to be ridiculous,just as you and thousands of others do. It took a long time and hundreds of conversations before I reached the conclusion, and later the

conviction,that I was dealing with realities. “The second stage was no less labour-consuming for me. I had to answer the questions: for what,where,and at what time and in what manner should the search be conducted? “I consider that this stage of the work has now been completed. Today I can take a map,say of Kabarda,point to four comparatively restricted areas and say: `A well-equipped group sent to that locality is sure to sight an *almasti* within a year at the very most.` “You underline that you don`t believe in the devil. I don`t want to yield to you on this point, so I hasten to announce that I also don`t believe in the devil. What is more,I don`t `believe` in the *almasti* . I possess sufficient data to simply say that he exists!”

The search continues

Of course, the interrogation system employed by Jeanne Koffman in her investigation is not fully reliable, although in many respects it ia convincing and trustworthy. Ethnographers,folklorists and historians resort to it when there is no other way of obtaining information,when material evidence of the given events has disappeared. In the case of the *almasti* neither the animal itself nor its traces have been photographed. There are also no bone relics. As to that, human bones survived in graves and vaults,but would they have been preserved for long if left on the ground? Also, some animals have the custom of “burying” their dead in secret places.It is not without reason that the phrase “to find a dead monkey” is considered in Ceylon as a symbol of something impossible to achieve.The demise of elephants is shrouded in mystery. It may be that the *almasti* throw the corpses of their dead into the swirling waters of mountain rivers or into the abyss of rocky caverns,and that is why their skeletons have never been discovered.The indignation of scientists whenever a rash of sensations gets underway is quite understandable. After all,you can`t send out expeditions to track every rumour. Yet these rumours persist, and a far-flung search must be attempted before it is too late, before *almasti*

become extinct undiscovered. So no official search has yet been launched to find the *almasti.* Academic anthropology continues to

gnore Jeanne Koffman`s evidence, considering the data collected to be the result of mass hallucinations or superstition. Meanwhile, Jeanne Koffman has gone to the Caucasus again,without waiting for someone to decide whether an expedition should be sent.

Those who know Jeanne-Marie-Therese Koffman aren`t amazed at her energy and persistence. She has lead an interesting life. French by nationality and a surgeon by profession,she volunteered for the front during the war and became instructress of an Alpine air-borne unit in the Northern Caucasus. She was air-dropped many times and took part in combat operations. She became an expert motor-cycle and automobile driver, learned to shoot accurately and to ride horseback in daredevil fashion. The steep pathways of the Caucasus were like a paved highway to her.

So,are there Neanderthals living today? Although Professor Porshnev, a supporter of serious investigation and carefully checked conclusions,keeps repeating to excitable people,"Keep calm,there will be no sensations!" perhaps Jeanne Koffman or some other searcher in the near future will make a discovery that will astound the world.

ANOMALISTIC REFERENCES IN *MARFAN*, BY PETER READING

by RICHARD GEORGE

Peter Reading (1946-2011), whom I mentioned at the end of a piece in *Flying Snake* 20, is one of the most important poets of the last fifty years. Here's some of the back cover blurb from his publisher:

One of Britain's most original and controversial poets: angry, uncompromising, gruesomely ironic, hilarious and heartbreaking… mixing the matter and speech of the gutter with highly sophisticated metrical and syllabic patterns to produce scathing and gruesome accounts of lives blighted by greed, meanness, ignorance, political ineptness and cultural impoverishment…

From our point of view, he was a passionate ornithologist and naturalist: he wrote a poem about the dodo (1), and mentioned in passing the thylacine (2), without saying whether or not he believed in its survival. He was also a, ahem, wine connoisseur. Here are these interests dovetailing in his 1999 poem *Veracruz:*

we were regaled with

kingfishers – Belted,

Green, Ringed, Amazon…

to celebrate which:

beer and salt and limes (3).

I empathise !

Around then he had fallen on very hard times (4), but was rescued by a grant by the Lannan Foundation, founded by the eponymous J. Patrick Lannan jr. in 1960 (5). This paid for, *inter alia*, a writing residency in the "small, beautiful" (it's certainly small !) Texas plateau ranching town of Marfa, which, of course, is second only to Hessdalen for anomalous light phenomena (6). The result: probably the best of his later books, 2000's *Marfan* (7).

Reading was certainly not a Fortean, as will become clear, but he was an enthusiastic collector of comical or bizarre newspaper clippings. I wrote to *Fortean Times* a few years ago about something of his about vegetable throwers (8). He was also a tremendous eavesdropper. It didn't take him long to infiltrate the bars of Marfa and its "trash" culture.

Fifteen years earlier, writing about seafarers, Reading had mentioned St. Elmo's Fire (9), so it is hardly surprising *Marfan* contains

several passages on the Marfa Lights. Reading first reports the original sighting of 1883 by Robert Reed Ellison, and the slightly later testimony of a surveyor called Williams. He then quotes, virtually word for word, the account of a *Houston Chronicle* reporter of the 1980s, a near namesake of his, Stan Redding, itself cited in a contemporary book of Texas mysteries (10):

They darted about the ground – red, white and blue,
orbs, baseball-sized. They blended into one,
then separated. One of them would zoom
high in the air, then plummet into the brush,
then rise an instant later and spin away
crazily. Unsupported and unattached,
each one illuminated the black-brush clump
over which it hovered.

Then, in his own persona, Reading writes:

Tonight, off 90 East,

a curious ignis fatuus fulminates...

This is intriguing, Did he himself witness the phenomenon ? Of course, with his alcohol intake, he might not be the most credible witness.

Now enter a character out of Jonathan Downes via David Byrne and Talking Heads's movie *True Stories*, the (presumably) paranoid schizophrenic driver of a Chevrolet pickup truck, who gives Reading a lift and bends his ear:

Ya know, tham lights back thar on 90 East,

thays flickerin signal messages tew me

most every night straight from the CIA,

thay thay thay thay thay thay thay thay thay thay

thay say thay say ah keep mah handgun loaded

Mirage Men, indeed. Reading then sums up the Marfa mystery lights, with

what seems like admirable open-mindedness:

The Lights, demystified by divers eminents:

electrostatic discharge; swamp gas; moonlight

shining on veins of mica; ghosts of Spanish

Conquistadors who sought gold here; a mirage

produced by cold and hot layers of air

refracting light;

- and here is the Chevy driver:

Ya know tham Mystery Flickers ?

Well, what it is, the CIA is beaming
encrypted messages from Washington
onto the water tower – ya know, that silver
cylinder thar with MARFA writ on ? Well,
tham coded signals bounce right off the tower
and light up the entire Chinati Mountains
with flicker flicker flicker flicker flicker

One explanation Reading doesn't include is reflected car lights. In 2004 four academics at the University of Dallas concluded all the lights they had observed over four days could be attributed to automobiles along Highway 67 between Marfa and Presidio (11). Except… there were no cars in 1883, when Ellison first saw the phenomenon, The scientists doubtless would reason: "There were no cars in 1883, therefore Ellison was mistaken, or lying". But what if he wasn't ? And is just four days' testimony representative ?

Marfan's next allegedly paranormal event is a ghost sighting of Zane Grey, author of Westerns, and his buddy, Sheriff of Presidio Jeff Vaughan. Take this, like the tequila, with a lick of salt:

Some feller I met in Ray's Bar told me how
one night, after a dozen or so Lone Stars,

as he was going for home, he saw Jeff Vaughan
on Jack o' Diamonds and Zane Grey on a burro
heading down Highland from the County Courthouse.
He mumbled "How y'all ?" and they said "Howdy !"
then rode, transparent, plumb through the Library wall.

In this context, a dozen or so beers probably constitutes moderate drinking.

Finally, courtesy of a local quarterly called *The Desert Candle*, we have all the fun of the fair of pareidolia (12). It was the week before Christmas 1996, and a Latina lady in Fort Stockton was greatly missing her deceased son. Lo and behold, comfortingly, one of her tortillas bore the image of Mary, Jesus, Joseph *and* the donkey. Reading is good enough to include a photograph (they're below average simulacra, even by the standards of these things). I wish all sceptics had this wit:

To the Editor, the Desert Candle – Sir,
your article concerning the tortilla
with revelatory powers was no big deal.
I have at home: a partially cooked chupatti
showing a living likeness of the Buddha;
great Krishna limned in a popadam; a nacho
clearly depicting Jupiter enthroned;
Mahomet's profile on a Hershey Bar;
and all Olympus in a blueberry muffin.

Texan pterodactyl sightings ? Not in *Marfan*, I'm sorry to say. But here's the next best thing:

At Panther Junction there's a massive tibia
of a Pterosaur which weighed 70 kilos
and had a 36 foot wingspan (more
than a small jet fighter).
In the late Cretaceous
its shadow darkly traversed the Big Bend floodplain.

As briefly, and less menacingly, Peter Reading's shadow traversed Marfa.

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The Peel Street Monster-Looking Back at a local Cryptid

Dr Karl Shuker

Shuker Nature blog August 18th 2021

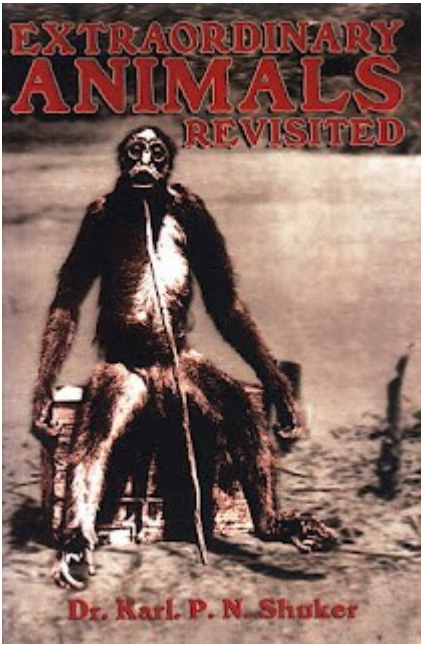
Vintage illustration of a coati (public domain)

It's always good to stumble upon the history of a mystery beast not

previously documented in the cryptozoological literature (which it hadn't been, prior to my doing so in a *Fortean Times* article and subsequently in my book *Extraordinary Animals Revisited*), and especially when it happens to be a local one – having occurred just a few miles away from where I was born and still live. Yet although the case of the Peel Street Monster began in high drama, the outcome was distinctly underwhelming.

During winter 1933-34, rumours began circulating within the area of Brick kiln Street and Peel Street in the large urban West Midlands town (now city) of Wolverhampton, England, of a bizarre creature

that was attacking children. One bold lad who tried to pursue this beast, which became known as the Peel Street Monster, presumably angered it, because it allegedly leapt at his throat, attempting to bite him.



Extraordinary Animals Revisited **(© Dr Karl Shuker/CFZ Press)**

There came a day in January 1934, however, when this vicious creature made one onslaught too many. A crowd of boys and youths, who included among their number a 17-year-old called Georgie Goodhead, were playing on the corner of St Mark's Street and Raglan Street, when another boy, Jackie Franklin, raced out of Peel Street and up towards them in a state of great alarm. Shouting for help, he told them that a youngster called Billy Wright (but not the famous future Wolverhampton Wanderers footballer of that same name, at least as far as I'm aware) was being attacked by the monster on some waste ground. Georgie and his mates raced back to Peel Street at once with Jackie, where they observed a peculiar-looking animal threatening a small :

I went and saw a queer animal, far too big for a rat, leaping towards a

boy. In a later *Wolverhampton Express and Star* newspaper report, Georgie recalled:

I went and saw a queer animal, far too big for a rat, leaping towards a child about five-year[s]-old. I shouted and the thing turned on me. It crouched, its eyes bulging, then it leaped like lightning.

According to the newspaper report, as the creature neared his throat Georgie picked up a brick and hit it with this hefty implement as hard as he could. The animal collapsed, falling into a pool of water, and was swiftly kicked to death by the crowd that had gathered to watch the boys confronting it. Happily, little Billy was unhurt, and was taken by some of the boys to his parents' sweetshop in Peel Street, while Georgie and Jackie gave a statement at the Red Lion police station and received half a crown each for their bravery.

As for the Peel Street Monster: apart from noting that it was a male, no-one had any idea what this mystifying beast was. According to media reports, naturalists, taxidermists, and vets were all called in to identify it, but to no avail. One unnamed 'expert' did suggest that it may be an anteater – in Wolverhampton?? Another one considered it possible that the creature (despite being dead!) might become a serious rival to the Loch Ness monster.

A ring-tailed coati *Nasua nasua*, the most familiar of the four recognised coati species and native to South America (© Dr Karl Shuker)

Events took an even more surprising turn the following day, when a second mystery beast was found in the Brickkiln region. This one, a female, was already dead, but it closely resembled the Peel Street Monster. Moreover, a photograph of it published in the *Express and Star* helped to identify its species.

It was a South American coati (coatimundi) – a long-tailed relative of the raccoon and belonging to the genus *Nasua*, with a head-and-body length of up to 2 ft, a thin tail of much the same length, and distinguished by its very elongate snout (responsible for the 'anteater' identity proffered for the Peel Street Monster?).

But where had it, and the Peel Street specimen, come from? And if there had been a pair on the loose, could there be more?

The prospect of a plague of coatis terrorising the good residents of Wolverhampton may seem decidedly slim (not least because the favoured diet of coatis consists of invertebrates and small lizards – as opposed to small children!). Nevertheless, the council was clearly taking no chances, for as the *Express and Star* duly reported:

And fresh fears arose in Wolverhampton as rumours spread that there may be a colony of the creatures hiding in partly closed cellars. Hundreds of people gathered in Salop Street to watch council workers trying to ascertain if a colony of the creatures were hiding there. The crowds were so great they hampered the efforts of the official rat-catcher. In the search, weapons brought in to confront any coatimundis found included poison gas, traps, sulphur, terriers and ferrets. It was uncertain whether the ferrets were to be used following a suggestion that they might form part of the coatimundi diet [I don't think so!].

As ably demonstrated by this white-snouted coati *Nasua narica*: when walking quadrupedally, coatis are famous for often holding their tails vertically upright with a little curl at the tip, giving them an unexpected superficial resemblance to small furry sauropod dinosaurs! (© Dennis Jarvis/Wikipedia – CC BY-SA 2.0 licence)

Ferrets or no ferrets, the search did not find any other errant coatis. Police investigations did reputedly reveal that the female coati had been in a travelling menagerie that had parked here earlier (circuses and fairs would sometimes set up on this slum-area waste ground at that time), and had discarded the creature's body after it had died. However, the Peel Street Monster's origin remains a mystery to this day – as do various other aspects of this curious case.

Can we even be sure that the Peel Street Monster was a coati? For if the accounts of it are true, it must have been an exceptionally belligerent specimen. The *Express and Star* published a photo of this creature lying dead with a crowd of onlookers surrounding it, but its form cannot be discerned. And what happened to the two carcases? Some correspondences reminiscing about this incident appeared 50 years later in the *Express and Star* during March 1994, but conflicting recollections only served to muddy these already murky waters even further.All in all, after also allowing for the likelihood of embellished descriptions with such an odd episode, the only thing that can be said with certainty regarding the Peel Street Monster is that something unexpected was seen and killed in Wolverhampton – a most unsatisfactory end to one of the most intriguing OOP animal cases on file from the West Midlands. True, coatis (unlike anteaters!) are nowadays often kept as exotic pets – a friend of mine at university owned one, and I also well remember about 10 years ago seeing one with a collar and lead being taken for a walk by its owner through another local Midlands town, duly attracting considerable interest and attention from passers-by, including me – but whether an escaped/released pet coati explains the Peel Street Monster is another matter entirely.

Finally: I was recently reminded of this curious case when Canadian Facebook friend Kevin Stewart kindly sent to me a scan of a Canadian

newspaper cutting documenting it, which was particularly interesting to me as I was previously unaware that this relatively obscure, ostensibly local-interest-only UK story had ever attracted any overseas media coverage. The cutting was from Alberta's *Edmonton Bulletin* for 17 February 1934, so for the purposes of historical documentation, here it is – thanks Kevin!

FIND STRANGE BEASTS IN SLUM-CLEARED LOT

Tree Bear Killed While Attacking Child

Wolverhampton.—A youth killed a strange animal, later identified as a coati mundi, or tree bear, while it was attacking a baby.

A second animal of the same species was found dead near a slum clearance area.

Now the experts are wondering if a colony of the creatures has been established in the area, which, potholed as it is with cellars beneath the ruins of slum dwellings, is admirably adapted as a breeding ground for the species.

Tree bears, natives of South America, are about three and a half feet in length with shaggy coats and a head like a wild boar's. They are known to be vicious in attack.

1 COMMENT

*Martin Harris*19 August 2021 at 22:01

A monster raccoon lurching around Peel Street! Amazing how the media can make a cat-sized critter into a rival for the Loch Ness monster! Great story and new to me. Thanks Karl

HERTFORDSHIRE CRYPTOZOOLOGY – A SMORGASBORD

by RICHARD GEORGE

As you may have gathered from my recent articles on ABCs and rheas, Hertfordshire is a "happening" county for cryptozoology. Here's a round-up, in no particular order, of its other unofficial fauna.

The first case is right on the border with Essex, but animals cross county boundaries in blithe ignorance. In May 2011, a "cream-coloured wolf" was seen twice near Henham, near Bishops Stortford (1). This could have been an albino Samson fox (see my article from 2015 in *FS* 9). Sticking with possible vulpids, in July 2010 a man in St. Albans claimed to have spotted a fox the size of a wolf or Alsatian, in a tree (2). Cue some scepticism online. Could this too have been a Samson fox (3) ?And in September 2018, a tanuki or "raccoon dog", probably an AWOL pet, was discovered living snugly under garden decking in Rickmansworth, and made the national news (4).On with the motley, to wild boar. In September 2010 a woman was charged by a sounder of them on the Ashridge estate (5). A sighting from the Gaddesden hills, not far from there, was reported online in March 2014 (6). On the same forum, in December the same year, a contributor wrote about "a couple of reports just north of St. Albans". The most likely location would be Symondshyde Great Wood. Five years later, on the same website, someone claimed to have seen boar crossing the road near Broxbourne, further east in the county, and commented "There's a lot more [wild boar] around in Hertfordshire than people think".

Wallabies are spreading east in the Chiltern Hills. There are perhaps 100 in Oxfordshire, and "hot spots" in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. So far, the only record in Hertfordshire is of an escaped pet from Hitchin that lolloped around villages near where I grew up, like the Offleys, in November 2013 (7). I suspect this is a case of "Watch this space !"

Just over the border, if you don't mind, to tell you about a Garden Dormouse sighting I didn't mention in my article in *FS* 16. In 1993, according to the Bedfordshire Natural History Society's annual round-up, a cat in Toddington brought in a young *eliomys quercinus* (8). Toddington boasts a service station on the M1. This sounds like another stowaway. Will the Garden Dormouse infiltrate this country along the branches of motorways ?

Now for something even smaller again. The Union Rustic Moth was last observed in the U.K. in 1935 – at Bushey Heath here in Herts. According to a leading moth website, "it might just possibly be overlooked" (9). A possible, not actual cryptid, but get your nets out !

Then there is the very strange story of the Potters Bar Beetle, *aglyptinus agathidioides*. This species is only known to science from two specimens found on the nest of a moorhen near Potters Bar in April 1912 – hence its name (10). The genus *aglyptinus* belongs to Central America: the beetles may have entered the U.K. in a shipment of bananas. But why have no specimens been found in Central America ?

Another enigmatic species of beetle is the Scarlet Malachite, found in the U.K. in only eight sites, several of which are in Hertfordshire (11). It only lives where farming practice has changed little in the last fifty years, and that is certainly true of its Hertfordshire habitat near the village of Walkern, east of Stevenage, home of the alleged witch Jane Wenham.My late father worked in Stevenage in the Seventies, and fell under the spell of this countryside because of its remoteness, the richness of its medieval history, and, well, its aura, its atmosphere. It's been called "Hertfordshire's Devon", which

gives you some impression of how distinctive it is. One of the last times he and I walked there together was at the end of the Eighties. In a large ancient wood just off the A1170 called Plashes Wood, we encountered something rather unsettling: a rust-munched old sign from the Twenties or Thirties reading

BEWARE
OF SNAKES.

What's perplexing about this is that adders, and other creatures that could be mistaken for them like grass snakes and slow worms, are very rare in north-east Hertfordshire (12). There is an "urban legend" that the Duke of Edinburgh erected "BEWARE OF SNAKES" signs at Balmoral to deter poachers (13), so something like that might explain the Plashes Wood sign.

But there is another factor in all this: local mythology in Hertfordshire and Essex about snakes and dragons.

In 1669, nine years before the world heard about the "Hartfordshire Mowing Devil", a pamphlet was issued entitled "The Flying Serpent or Strange News Out Of Essex" (14). To be precise, out of Henham, not the Henham in Hertfordshire mentioned earlier, but the village near Saffron Walden.

But we don't need to flap over the border to Essex. Close to Plashes Wood in Hertfordshire lies Shonks's Moat, commemorating Piers Shonks, a mythical giant and dragon-slayer of the 11th century. Another local legend states that Aspenden, a village close by, derives its name from the vast numbers of asps that lived nearby (15). This is completely fanciful: the name actually means "Valley of the aspen trees" (16). But it shows how central snakes are to local folklore. Even in the second half of the 20th century, when author Shirley

Toulson visited the area, this tradition was not far below the surface: *Satan swore that although Piers might be safe where he lived, whether he was buried within or without the church, his soul would go to Hell. "So we buried him in the wall", the lady who was arranging the Whitsun flowers told me, as though the whole event had happened yesterday…* (17).

There may, of course, be a kernel of fact in all this. It's a short slither from dragons to snakes. Was there a large population of adders in this area at one point, and did Piers Shonks help eradicate them ?

There's a lot else eldritch around Plashes Wood. The village name Puckeridge means "Goblin's ridge" (18), and the ruined church at Thundridge is Hertfordshire's counterpart to Clophill St. Mary's, with ghosts and Satanists and being built "the wrong way round". This region of east Hertfordshire also lies within Nigel Pennick's curious join-the-dots exercise in pareidolia, the "Nuthampstead Zodiac" (19). In this context, whatever its intention, the BEWARE OF SNAKES sign resonated eerily.

Before I go, I must say something about a couple of old-time cases, if only to defuse expectation. The paranormaldatabase website contains a record from "the late 19th/early 20th century" from South Mimms, where the witness saw a human-like creature rise from the ground and leap over a bridge. This happened on a misty night (20). I doubt it was a "winged weirdo" or Spring-Heeled Jack: it could have been another misidentified swan.Then there is the "Hoddesdon Mothman", which I found on Neil Arnold's blog (21). With respect, there's not a great deal to this either. Apparently, more than a century ago (more imprecise dating), a youth called Tom Simmonds ran amok with a knife in the home of his former employer. In his frenzy, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and looked around to see a huge dark-coloured entity with wings and a human face, staring at him disapprovingly. Only he saw it. A hallucination ? A tall tale to save himself from the

gallows ? Later (time not specified) another local man saw a winged being which dissuaded him from killing himself.

I don't think these figures had any objective reality, and anyway they don't really fall under cryptozoology: they sound more like angels. You can have dark-coloured angels, can't you ?

BLACK-EYED ANGELS SWAM WITH ME…

Radiohead, *Pyramid Song*

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Notes & Queries

A Talking Duck

`You bloody fool': Australian talking duck proves birds can imitate speech

The Guardian online September 7th 2021

"Australian musk ducks can imitate sounds including human speech, with one bird recorded repeatedly saying "you bloody fool", according to a new study. The recording of the talking duck appears to be the first comprehensively documented instance of the species being able to mimic sounds they hear, joining other birds including songbirds, parrots and hummingbirds. Ripper, a male musk duck reared in captivity at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, south west of Canberra, was recorded vocalising the sound of doors slamming shut as well as the phrase "you bloody fool".

Researchers believe it was a phrase Ripper likely heard repeatedly from his caretaker, but are unsure how old he was when first exposed to it. He was four years old at the time of the recordings and made his vocalisations during aggressive mating displays.

Retired Australian researcher Dr Peter Fullagar first recorded Ripper more than three decades ago. But his recordings were only recently resurfaced by Prof Carel ten Cate of Leiden University in the Netherlands, who came across an obscure reference to a talking duck in a book on bird vocalisations…."

Man can change the size of his own eye-balls on command

https://www.livescience.com/man-can-control-pupil-dilation.html

Thanks to Bob Skinner for this

Some people can wiggle their ears, some can fold their tongues ... this man can dilate and constrict his pupils on demand.

A 23-year-old student in Germany can shrink and enlarge his pupils on demand, according to a new case report — a feat that was previously thought to be impossible.

Two tiny opposing muscles in the eye act as puppeteers of each pupil (the dark center of the eye), dilating or enlarging them in a dark environment to let in more light and constricting them in a bright environ-

ment to limit the amount of light that flows in. This process was thought to be completely automatic; when you step into a dark room, you don't have to consciously tell your pupils to change size. Pupils can also change size in response to other factors, such as increases in arousal.

It was previously known that some people can change their pupil size at will, but by using indirect methods.

For example, researchers already knew that just thinking about the sun could constrict the pupils and that thinking of a dark room or mentally calculating something could dilate them, said Christoph Strauch, senior author of the new case report and an assistant professor in the experimental psychology department at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

But no one thought it was possible to change pupil size by directly controlling it like a muscle — that is, until a student of psychology at Ulm University in Germany contacted Strauch after taking one of his courses. (Strauch was previously a doctoral student at Ulm University).

When he was about 15 or 16 years old, the young man — identified in the case report by his initials, D.W. — realized that he could change the size of his pupils. "I showed a friend that I can 'tremble' with my eyeballs, and he noticed that my pupils became small," D.W. told Strauch and his colleagues at Ulm University. But D.W. didn't notice that he had this ability until he played computer games for long periods of time."Constricting the pupil feels like gripping, tensing something; making it larger feels like fully releasing, relaxing the eye," D.W. told the researchers. At first, he would change his pupil size by focusing in front of or behind an object, but with practice,

he learned how to do it without focusing on objects. He told the researchers that, to change his pupil size, all he has to do is concentrate on the eye; he doesn't have to imagine a bright or dark environment.

That makes D.W. different from other people who have demonstrated the ability to change their pupil size, Strauch told Live Science. What's more, that he can feel the muscles in the pupils directly "is astonishing, as it was thought to be impossible."

How rare is this?

Through a series of tests, the researchers confirmed that D.W. indeed had this ability — and they found no indication that he was changing the size of his pupils indirectly. In one test, the researchers measured the electrical properties of the skin by applying voltage to test whether he was aroused by increased mental effort, which also might have increased his pupil size indirectly. (He wasn't.)

Without using any indirect method, D.W. could dilate his pupils up to 0.09 inches (2.4 millimeters) in diameter and constrict them to 0.03 inches (0.88 mm) in diameter. What's more, even at the closest point an object can be for the eye to still see it in focus, in which the pupil is already "maximally" constricted (imagine holding up a pencil in front of the eyes and moving it closer to the face and stopping at the point before it becomes blurry), D.W. could voluntarily constrict his pupil even more. By doing this, D.W. improved his focus and could see objects clearly nearly two times closer to his face than he could if he wasn't controlling his pupil size. Using a type of brain scan known as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the researchers found increased activation of certain parts of the brain involved in volition, or the ability to decide and do something out of free will.

The researchers can't say for sure that D.W. was directly controlling his pupils, but from their many tests, they did not find any evidence that he was using indirect strategies.

Can other people learn to do this? Possibly, Strauch said. Finding and researching more people who have this ability might help the team understand whether there's a strategy for training people to control their pupil size at will. (Readers who think they may have this ability can reach out to the researchers at pupilcontrol@gmail.com.)

Studies of more people who might have this ability may help researchers describe and understand the phenomenon, such as where it came from, Strauch added. "Quite some people have reached out who believe that they might be able to do the same thing — this is really cool," he said.
The findings were published online Aug. 12 in the International Journal of Psychophysiology.

Sparrow`s taste in music

The Times September 9th 2021

Sir,Your article “Australian duck is first to `talk` ...and calls its mate a bloody fool” (Sep 7)reminds me of a baby sparrow that we reared after it fell out of its nest at four days old. Although Mozart is often mentioned in studies with animals ,his music produced no reaction. What really got the bird fired up was rock, in particular the guitar riff in Guns N` Roses *Live and Let Die* .It spent hours sitting by the stereo trying to get the sequence of notes correct, and after only a week could make a passable imitation.

Susanna Clarke

Leighton Buzzard,Beds

New beautiful, dragon-like species of lizard discovered in the Tropical Andes

https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/926797

August 30th 2021

Thanks to Shane Lea

"The Huallaga River in the Andes of central Peru extends for 1,138 km, making it the largest tributary of the Marañón River, the spinal cord of the Amazon River. This basin harbours a great variety of ecosystems, including the Peruvian Yunga ecoregion, which is considered a shelter of endemic birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

How is it possible, then, that this corner of the Tropical Andes remains poorly known to biologists to this day? The main reason is indeed a quite simple one and it lies in the civil wars with terrorist organisations and drug traffickers that were going on in the region in the 1980s, disrupting biological studies.

It wasn't until the late 1990s that the Peruvian government was able to liberate the area, and that's when, little by little, some biologists began to venture back to the Huallaga Valley. However, forest destruction by coca plantations during the internal war, which eventually led to the construction of a hydroelectric power plant, left the Huallaga valley highly fragmented, making for an even more urgent need for biodiversity research in the area. A new species of wood lizard, *Enyalioides feiruzae,* was recently confirmed from the premontane forest of the Huallaga river basin, and described in the open-access, peer-reviewed scientific journal *Evolutionary Systematics*. It took the researchers seven years of field surveys to formally describe it. To do so, they had first to spend plenty of nights in the forests, in order to pick by hand lizards that were sleeping on bushes 20–150 cm above the ground…."

Potential New Jellyfish Species is a Blood Red Beauty

https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/potential-jellyfish-species-blood-red-192524693.html

August 10th 2021

"Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (or NOAA) recently put out a report describing a dive into an underwater canyon. Like one we'd expect to come from a trip to Enceladus, the report described different weird ocean creatures. One aquatic animal spotted was a jellyfish that looks like a mix between a jumbo blood cell and an umbrella. The throbbing, bobbing thing may even be a whole new species of jellyfish. The NOAA released the dive report in late July of this year. In it, they sum up a look at the water column of the underwater canyon. The water column is a concept used in oceanography to describe the characteristics of seawater at different depths of a defined geographical point. The explorers took a look at this canyon from the ocean's surface down to a depth of 3,500 feet…"

A crocodile in Yorkshire

`Crocodile` spotted on loose in Yorkshire garden year after similar sighting

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/crocodile-castleford-yorkshire-spotted-sighting-b1923390.html?fbclid=IwAR1WhXrB0YmHl7VKJqrAw83r3PsjJ4I-FTcNlJh7yG_RIrC19Yx-YQS9C9w Independent online

September 20th 2021 Liam James

`Castleford croc` remains a mystery

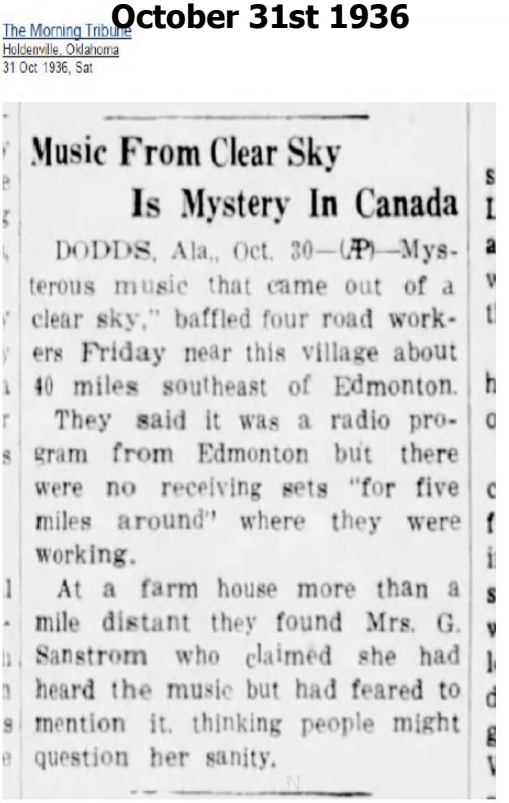
A Yorkshire woman was stunned when she saw what appeared to be

a crocodile roaming free in her neighbour's garden…"Sarah Jayne Ellis said she spotted the creature from her house near the River Aire in Castleford.

Music from a clear sky

The Morning Tribune Oklahoma

October 31st 1936



The Morning Tribune
Holdenville, Oklahoma
31 Oct 1936, Sat

Music From Clear Sky Is Mystery In Canada

DODDS, Ala., Oct. 30—(AP)—Mysterous music that came out of a clear sky," baffled four road workers Friday near this village about 40 miles southeast of Edmonton.

They said it was a radio program from Edmonton but there were no receiving sets "for five miles around" where they were working.

At a farm house more than a mile distant they found Mrs. G. Sanstrom who claimed she had heard the music but had feared to mention it, thinking people might question her sanity.

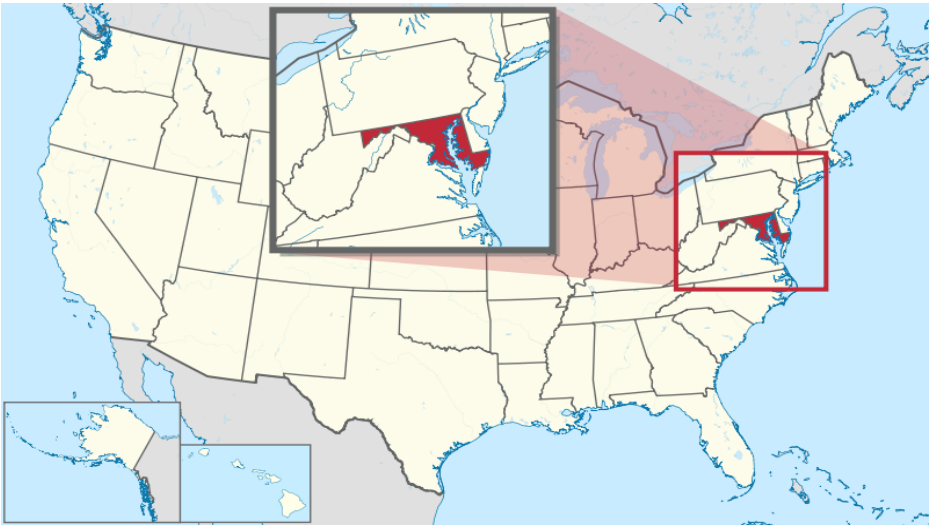
Zebras in Maryland

Off in a flash, zebras elude search party

I paper September 13th 2021

In the wild they can be caught by several predators, but in leafy rural Maryland, a pack of zebras has been eluding an animal ranger for several days.

Rodney Taylor,animal services division chief in Prince George county, said: " They`re just too fast, they run, they won`t let you get near them." He also warned they could kick and bite. The five zebras—collectively known as a dazzle-escaped from a private farm in Upper Marlboro,where 39 zebras were brought legally last month…"



Wikipedia Creative Commons Location of Maryland in the USA

Freshwater Octopus in Kentucky

https://www.natureworldnews.com/amp/articles/47505/20210918/incredible-octopus-spotted-kentuckys-rivers.htm?__twitter_impression=true&fbclid=IwAR3imk6G8LVxZjy1_OPXLs1BG3RT1fTAsQ7reOOlE0diA_OxHa64qYhCmpQ

Incredible! Rare Freshwater Octopus Spotted in Kentucky's Rivers, How Did it Get There?

By Precious Smith Sep 18, 2021 12:00 PM EDT

“Freshwater Octopus
Octopuses do not stay in freshwater as their home. No species of freshwater octopus is known. Scientists don't know if the freshwater octopuses actually exist or its existence is just a myth.

However, some "freshwater" octopus can be found in rivers of North America but they are hard to find.

The freshwater octopus is a cephalopod, medium in size and about 2-3 feet long. These creatures have been seen in few places. In Kentucky, they were sighted in the Licking River.

The one in Kentucky was discovered far back in 1959. The octopus was gray in colour and it was found to be moving onto the Licking River's bank close to Covington. An octopus was also discovered on the Ohio River at the Falls of the Ohio State Park...Have you in any way sighted any octopuses in either the Ohio River or the Licking River?” Robert Trice and R. M. Saunders were fishing on the Kanawha River close to Charleston, West Virginia, on December 24,1933,

when they pulled in an octopus that is about 3-foot. Mark Hall's recent research has proven this event to be a joke.

November 19, 1999, on the Ohio River bank at the Falls of the Ohio State Park, Jeffersonville, Indiana, a lifeless octopus was discovered on some fossil beds. The creature was identified as either a Bumblebee two-stripe octopus - *O. filosus*, or a Caribbean armstripe octopus - *Octopus burryi*, both are Atlantic species and can be found in aquariums. The dead octopus was not found in a decomposition state."

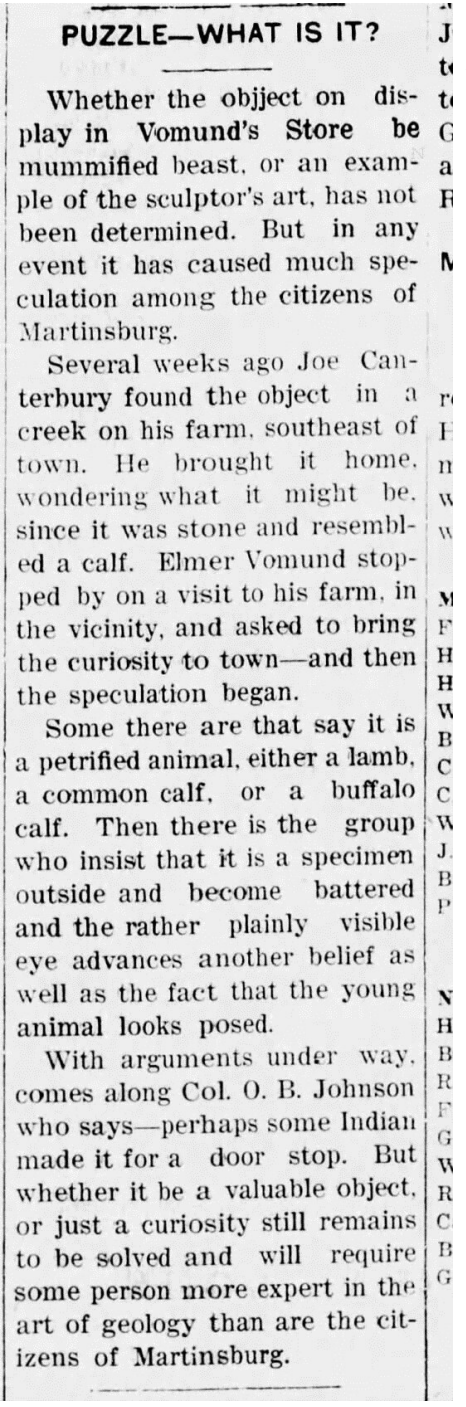
Wally the wonderful wandering walrus

I Paper September 22nd 2021

Wally walrus spotted 900 miles away

Wally the Walrus,who stunned Britons after emerging off the coasts of Wales and Cornwall earlier this year, has been spotted 900 miles away in Iceland as he appears to be wending his way back to the Arctic.

The huge mammal, who weighs about 800kg,caused a wave of excitement during spring and summer this year as he turned up in various locations along the shores of Britain and Ireland.But he had not been seen for three weeks until marine experts identified him near Iceland on Sunday (September 16th)



PUZZLE—WHAT IS IT?

Whether the objject on display in Vomund's Store be mummified beast, or an example of the sculptor's art, has not been determined. But in any event it has caused much speculation among the citizens of Martinsburg.

Several weeks ago Joe Canterbury found the object in a creek on his farm, southeast of town. He brought it home, wondering what it might be, since it was stone and resembled a calf. Elmer Vomund stopped by on a visit to his farm, in the vicinity, and asked to bring the curiosity to town—and then the speculation began.

Some there are that say it is a petrified animal, either a lamb, a common calf, or a buffalo calf. Then there is the group who insist that it is a specimen outside and become battered and the rather plainly visible eye advances another belief as well as the fact that the young animal looks posed.

With arguments under way, comes along Col. O. B. Johnson who says—perhaps some Indian made it for a door stop. But whether it be a valuable object, or just a curiosity still remains to be solved and will require some person more expert in the art of geology than are the citizens of Martinsburg.

A Petrified calf?

Forteana Exchange Forum

Martinsburg Monitor

(Missouri)

May 8th 1941

Plague of scorpions in Egypt

https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/middle-east-earthquakes-floods-wildfires-scorpions-weekend-climate-chaos

November 14th 2021

Scorpion infestation in Egypt

"Egyptians in the southern city of Aswan were left scrambling for safety as a horde of scorpions took over the city. Three people were killed and at least 400 were stung, overwhelming hospitals in the area. Reports state the scorpions were washed into the streets and peoples' homes, where they were seeking refuge from the intense weather conditions. Aswan's governor, Ashraf Attia, has placed restrictions on travel and traffic due to the low visibility levels caused by the extreme weather. Citizens have been urged to stay at home and avoid places where there are trees, as well as driving on motorways. Schools in Aswan have also been ordered to close…"

A STRANGE ANIMAL.

If the reports of diamond diggers in the north-west of South Africa are to be believed, remarks a contemporary, a new animal has lately made its appearance as a candidate for the honour of being chased by any enterprising sportsman. It is called by the Bushmen, or natives, the "bear-lion," and is described as being about the size of a lion, but far stronger in make, and with a tremendous head and neck. Its legs are much shorter than a lion's, but much stouter, and it is apparently far more powerful. Its colour is a dark yellow, with black spots. It runs or creeps along the ground, but does not bound like a lion. Its "spoor" is very large. It has sometimes been seen accompanied by a smaller one—probably a cub—so that the race is apparently not yet quite extinct, whatever the animal may be.

Eastern Daily Press

November 17th 1879

A STRANGE ANIMAL.

An extraordinary creature was captured at Gong Gong, South Australia, a few days ago, which some people declare to be the original of the many "bunyip" stories which every now and then crop up in different parts of the colony. It is about 4ft. in length, and has four legs, webfooted, and a snout somewhat resembling that of a pig. It is covered with a coat of feathers, those in the tail being six or seven inches in length, but getting shorter and finer as they grow along the back towards the head, until they terminate on the shoulders and head in a kind of down, dark blue in colour. The hinder part of the body is covered with scales similar to those of a fish, and the tail, which comes back over the hinder parts of the body, is divided into two parts, each part being about 8in. long and 4in. broad. The stranger has greenish eyes, and appears to be amphibious, as it had just come out of a large dam near the railway line. The monster was disabled by a charge of shot, and the person who shot it advanced to despatch the thing, when it seized the stock of the gun and squealed like a pig. The skin has been carefully preserved.

Portsmouth Evening News

May 29th 1883

Giant Owl in Texas

On December 2nd 2021 Carla Teresa White posted the following report on my Mystery Birds Facebook group:

“Last week (don't know the exact day), in Lubbock, Texas, my daughter was a passenger in a car being driven by her mother-in-law. She looked to her right, and on the roof of a house they were passing by, there was standing/perched an owl that was 4 to 4.5 feet tall. It had black and white and gray feathers, and had yellow eyes. She said it looked directly into her eyes and maintained eye contact until she was past it. She wanted to have the driver turn around and go back, but the driver and other passenger just laughed and drove on. They hadn't seen it. (My daughter has just recently met her husband's family and didn't feel like she could insist on turning back.) This was in the daylight. She's going to try to draw what she saw. She said that it didn't have the mottled/camouflage pattern typical of owls, but couldn't really describe the pattern.”

I asked for further information and she provided it:
“The ears are not normal to any owl species. She said they were placed like a regular owl on the head, (kind of toward the outside) but they stuck straight up in the air, and the length...8 inches at least...doesn't fit any known owl.”

Letters to Fate

Thanks to Gary Mangiacopra

Fate August 1961,Vol 14,Number 8, Issue Number 137.

SUSPENDED ROCK LOCATED

Mrs A.S.Taylor

Ogden,Utah

Thank you for publishing my inquiry about a suspended rock in the May,1961,issue of FATE. I received six letters to date and four of the writers located the rock about which I had read. I also received some other very interesting information in these letters. It is wonderful to realize that there are such nice persons all over the country who will take the time and effort to write to a stranger.

In case you would be interested in the information about the rock, I will give it to you for what it is worth. The statement about the rock is on page 158 of the book **Flying Saucers Have Landed,**by Leslie and Adamski, quote:
"And even to this day there is a huge boulder of `Tay Ni-mu` ,Annam,in French Indo China.Reported to weigh over 300 tons, it hangs suspended in midair, with no visible means of support; a floating miracle of levitation. The natives believe it is held in the air by means of sound, so every moment of the day and night someone is humming a mantra to keep it from falling.Surely,if the reports on it are correct, it would be well worthwhile for a scientific expedition to visit Annam and investigate."

Annam is now Viet Nam.

Fate August 1961,Vol 14,Number 8, Issue Number 137.

ANOTHER SUSPENDED ROCK

J.B.Young, Yianakopulos

Long Beach,California

In the May,1961,issue of FATE I came across the letter by Mrs.A.S.Taylor,Ogden,Utah,asking if anyone knew the location of the rock suspended in midair.

This is a true story. I know the location and anyone who wishes to go and see this high red rock hanging in midair may do so. The story is as follows:

This 60-ton rock has been suspended in midair for the last 200 years in complete defiance of gravity. It came crashing down a hill in Vinukonda,near Madras,India,in 1750,but stopped in midair just as it was about to smash a little Hindu temple at the foot of the hill. It has remained miraculously suspended an inch or two above the roof of the sanctuary. There is a very narrow space between the bottom of the boulder and the pagoda`s rooftop through which you can see daylight

Fate August 1961,Vol 14,Number 8, Issue Number 137.

PRE-AUTO SPOOK LIGHT

Edna W.Billings

Hoboken, New Jersey

I read with interest in the September, 1960,issue about the Spook Light at Hornet, Missouri.

I sincerely wish the lad who won the honors for his discovery the best of luck in all that he attempts. However ,I would like for the young .

scientist to explain what caused the Hornet Spook Light to be visible long before there were highways or automobiles. Old timers who used to see the vicinity of the light as a landmark before the Civil War are gone, but still living are some who will tell you they knew of the light before the 1900`s. I well remember the light when my parents drove down to Hornet from Joplin in our surrey with the fringe around the top-before a car ever had been seen in that part of the country.

Folks in that vicinity accept the light as they do the rocks, the weeds, fresh water springs, lush fields and beautiful sunsets there in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains.

The pioneers who first settled in southwest Missouri knew about the light because it had been pointed out to them by friendly Indians living there. When some would-be authority or so-called scientist announces having solved the mystery of the light, I have observed a sly smile cross the faces of the folks who live there. If they make any remark at all, it is apt to be,"Well,let them have their fun."

I like your magazine very much and wish you continued success.

Fate, August 1961, Vol 14, Number 8, Issue Number 137

THE HUMMING SOUND

Henry H.Wohrer

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

In the March,1961,issue Lucille C.Hieber describes a humming sound which she hears at times. There have been reports from others who can hear, and even feel, this hum.

My cousin in Berlin, Germany, also can hear it and sometimes finds it annoying at night. I, too, have heard it on several occasions. It appears to be more audible indoors than outdoors, especially at night when there are no other noises.

The pitch of this hum appears to be a B natural, which is about 60

Cycles per second. Frequently there is a harmonic at 120 cycles and sometimes other harmonics of higher pitch. It therefore could be caused by anything operating on 60-cycle current. This would include electric clocks, a refrigerator, furnace fan, doorbell transformer, or even a large power transformer in the neighbourhood.

It is natural for a low-pitched sound to be more audible in some parts of the house than in others, It also is true that low frequency sounds (below 300 cycles)are non-directional. This means that one cannot tell from where the sound is coming.

Fate, August 1961, Volume 14,Number 8, Issue Number 137

EXPLODING MILK BOTTLES

George W.Dunton

Sierra Madre,California

In your February 1960,issue of FATE you carried an account of milk bottles exploding in a refrigerator. No doubt there have been many suggestions offered and I`d like to add mine to the list. I suggest that the answer may lie in ultrasonics. Enrico Caruso is credited with shattering a glass by sounding and sustaining a certain note. I`ve read of the breaking down of metal by sustaining it to a sound wave of a certain frequency and magnitude. Is it possible that in this refrigerator is a sound wave of such frequency that it is capable of causing the

explosion?A strong clue to the presence of ultrasonics is the temperature of the milk. It was stated that it rose as much as five degrees in two minutes within the milk, yet the airspace and refrigerator unit remained constant.This indicates to me that the milk is a receiver of some energy. Perhaps a skilled electronicor ultrasonic expert would go over the refrigerator with some measuring device that would reveal the presence of such a sound wave to see if this would solve the mystery.

Ever since reading my first issue of your magazine almost seven years ago I have been fascinated by the content of your excellent publication.

Fate, May 1961, Volume 14,Number 5,Issue number 134

GOODBYE

Louise W.Crahan

San Diego, California

In 1944 Walter J.Hill,son of James J.Hill founder of the Great Northern Railroad,asked my mother, Marion C.Whitney,to marry him. Both had known great heartbreak and disappointment and I was delighted when late in life, these two lonely people found happiness together.

Business matters concerned with Mr. Hill`s holdings in Montana required his presence there for several weeks, and the couple planned to wed when he returned to California. Mr Hill had been in Montana about a week when someone knocked on our door early one evening. I was dressing to go out and, thinking my date had arrived, I called to Mother to answer the door. I heard the almost inaudible murmur of her voice and then the slow closing of the door.

Moments later she entered my room.

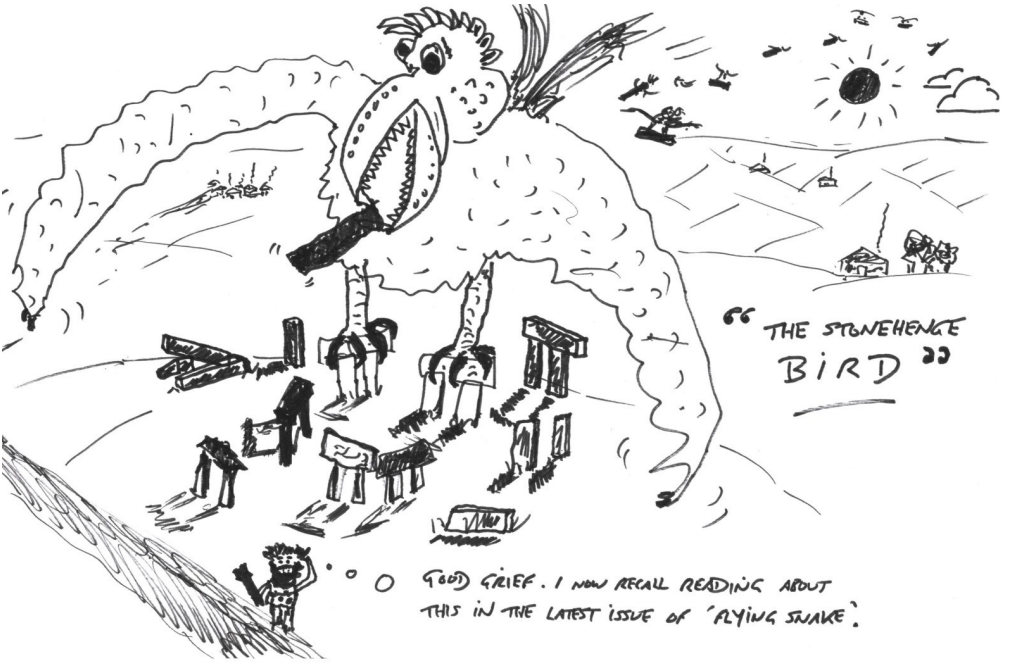
“That was Walter,” she said in a perplexed tone.”Something must be wrong. I didn`t expect him back for at least another week. When I opened the door, he just stood there looking at me, saying nothing. When I asked him to come in, he shook his head sadly, and turned away.”

“I ran to the front door, opened it, and scanned the deserted twilight

street. Where could he have gone in those few seconds it took Mother to tell me about him?

Soon after my date arrived and during the pleasant evening I nearly forgot about Walter`s strange visit. I arrived home after midnight to find Mother pacing the living room in a nearly hysterical condition.

“After you left,” she explained through sobs,” I received a long-distance call from Walter`s business manager in Montana. Walter dropped dead of a heart attack tonight in Livingston, Montana-at the same time he came to our door here.”



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Carving of an elephant and castle from 1380 in Chester cathedral

© Richard Muirhead